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Various Incidents
occuring in
The
American Panorama
by
Thames Williamson

THE MAN WHO CANNOT DIE

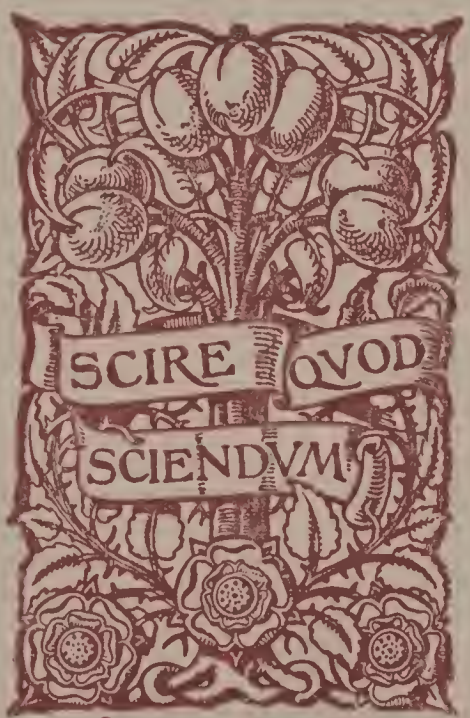
THE MAN WHO CANNOT DIE

By THAMES WILLIAMSON

Author of

"RUN SHEEP RUN," "GYPSY DOWN THE LANE," etc.

THE AMERICAN PANORAMA



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For Mary

NOTE

THE characters in this gentle fantasy are imaginary, and are not intended to reflect upon actual individuals. The names of most of my personages have been selected for onomatopoeic reasons, and it is only a coincidence that some of these names, such as Morton, Pentland, and Galloway, occur in Pennsylvania history.

Several of the characters introduced in this story appear in other of the novels which comprise *The American Panorama:*

Edward Galloway appears in *Texas Terror.*

Bob Heath appears in *Poison Plant.*

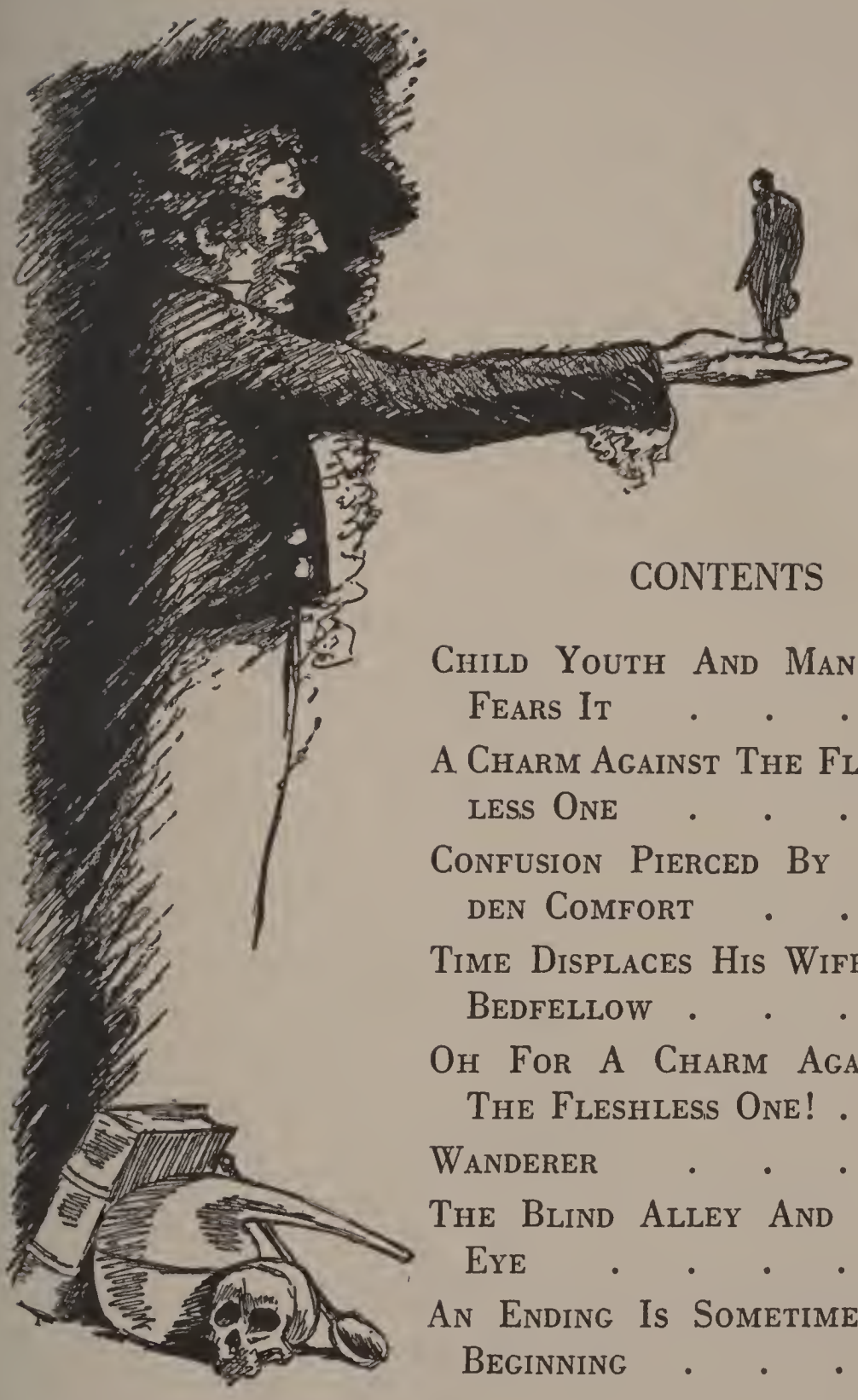
Arthur Pentland appears in *Snuff The Candle.*

The "blond man" appears in *Snuff The Candle, Once A Bluebird,* and *So Ends The Day.*

THAMES WILLIAMSON.

"Him must I show the dark and tenebrous road—
Necessity, not pleasure, is the goad."

—Dante.



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Child Youth And Man
He Fears It

I

In the days when the American people were so recent an offshoot from the European stem as hardly to have taken root in the soil of the New World, there lived, in the city of Philadelphia in the province of Pennsylvania, a gentleman by the name of Mr. Henry Morton.

Nature had endowed him with conspicuous talents, and these he had employed with such skill that at the age of thirty he was a distinguished member of the Philadelphia Bar, and at forty was recognized as the most successful barrister in the city. At fifty he had amassed a fortune and was living in a large and handsome house in Chestnut Street, a comfortable aristocrat, surrounded by luxury and elegance,—and all the while the breach between the mother country and her wayward colonies was widening and widening.

Born and bred in England, Mr. Morton loved her with an unquestioning tenacity, and being irascible by temperament he could not

help being offended at what he called the ridiculous demands of his patriotic neighbors, especially when these neighbors were of the propertyless class. He scorned to argue with them, but the times were inflammable, and when news of the Declaration of Independence reached his ears he was goaded into certain indiscreet remarks about the equality of man, after which his star began to waver and to dim away. Millers refused to grind corn for the haughty old Tory, boys thumbed their noses at him in the street, while anonymous pamphleteers threatened him with a tar and feathering party with himself as guest of honor. His legal practice fell off steadily, sank and crumbled until he found himself upon the brink of poverty, a wrinkled sour old man, brooding over the good old days when the mob was kept in place.

During these troubled years his wife was his chief comfort, then she unexpectedly died, leaving on his hands a daughter he had never understood.

The girl now proceeded to puzzle him even more: once melancholy, a hysterical cheerfulness suddenly broke out upon her; her custom-

ary pallor gave way to a continual flushing; formerly a great stay-at-home, she grew to hate and even fear the house. She insisted on visiting relatives until her period of mourning was up, and when she came home again it was to throw herself into a never-ending round of gayety. In the summer she picnicked upon the banks of the Schuylkill, in the autumn she danced, and in winter went sleigh-riding, in short she amused herself according to the time of year, until she fell in love with Ralph Pentland, whereupon the seasons ran together into continuous springtime.

Pentland was well-born, and in addition was very clever at writing verses. His art he now called up, concocting such agreeable mixtures of the stars in heavens, the zephyrs of the woodland, and the innumerable charms of Miss Jane Morton, as to make her really as happy as she had been pretending to be since her mother's death. This outpost taken, the lover advanced upon the father, leaving his poetizing at the door, and entering as one intent upon the necessity—the absolute necessity, sir—of preserving peace between Eng-

land and the colonies. He talked so well that the old barrister smiled upon him, listened attentively to his suit, and said yes.

The marriage followed quickly, and everyone was very happy, but after a while the poet-husband gave signs of leaning toward the cause of the patriots. One night there was an argument. Mr. Morton began with a lofty remark concerning rebels and rogues, to which his son-in-law replied with one or two insinuations as to the ocular defects of conservatism. The barrister grew warm, the opposing counsel waxed hot. Mr. Morton waved his daughter into silence and proceeded to deliver an opinion upon knaves, demagogues, ignoramuses, and Americans in general; he had scarcely concluded before young Pentland waved his wife into silence and launched into an extralegal account of traitors, enemies from within, and tools and creatures of Britain, to say nothing of dastardly betrayers of a righteous cause.

This interesting situation continued for several weeks, at the end of which time Mr. Morton seized upon the daughter he had so recently given away, and ordered the scamp

of a husband to be gone. Pentland went off to war without further talk, while the grief-stricken bride obediently returned to her father's house in Chestnut Street. There she languished, dull-eyed and sick at heart, sinking lower and lower with every passing day. The weeks dragged by . . . . . the months dragged by . . . . . no word of the absent soldier . . . . . one day the old barrister stalked into his daughter's room with twitching face.

"Why, father!" she exclaimed, "what is the matter?"

"Madam! that blackguard has been killed in an assault upon His Majesty's forces at Yorktown."

The new-made widow rose to her feet, gave a shriek, and fell in a swoon. A short while afterward she was prematurely delivered of a son,—Arthur Pentland.

II

The defeat of Cornwallis virtually ended the war, but it did not put a stop to the indignities to which Mr. Henry Morton had so long been subjected,—as a matter of fact, his position

became steadily more difficult. He was forbidden to practice in the courts. A crowd of hoodlums threw a stone through his front window, and when he rushed out upon them they knocked him down, tore off his wig, and paraded it up and down the street on the end of a pole. The law seized upon his property as just forfeit to the sovereign state of Pennsylvania, and presently an unsigned letter informed him that if he lingered in Philadelphia very much longer, his upper parts would be benumbed by an instrument even more effective than the paralysis which had already crippled his lower limbs.

He accordingly decided to leave the City of Brotherly Love, and to go west to Pittsburgh, where he hoped to make another fortune by speculating in land.

III

The Pittsburgh of that time was made up of a few log houses and store buildings clustering about the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, two wide and limpid streams flowing between wooded hills, green

hills. It was a pleasant scene, virgin, picturesque, with peace so clear upon it that the three travellers could not help being pleased: the baby crowed, the mother beamed, while the old barrister allowed a crooked smile to escape him.

The village itself turned out to be less inviting. Trappers and blanketed Indians, hunters, traders, scouts, adventurers, every kind of desperate and unwashed character strode up and down the muddy street. Not every one in the place was sober, and Mrs. Pentland did not at all like the way certain wild-looking persons were galloping up and down the river bank, now and then shouting out words which happily for her she did not understand. The only dwelling available was a log hut, so redolent with souvenirs of a former tenant that it was with great difficulty that the newcomers persuaded themselves to accept it even as a temporary shelter.

The land speculations of old Morton went very well, but though in time he exchanged the log house for a fine residence of brick, his opinion of Pittsburgh did not improve. Hardly a day went by that he did not

lecture his daughter upon the vulgarities of the town and upon the grievances of an English gentleman in so barbarous a place. He continued to refer to the Americans as rebels and to arraign them at an imaginary bar of justice, himself arguing the case against them and then turning magistrate in order to condemn them to purgatory for their insolence, after which judicial exercise he would fall back in his chair pale and exhausted, with perspiration standing out upon his brow.

As for the widow Pentland, she was also a mother, and it seemed to her that this rude frontier community was the very worst possible spot in which to bring up a child. The street in front of their house was a favorite gathering place for a number of hogs who came here to root about and grunt over matters of mutual interest, and when the old barrister one day declared these porkers no more offensive (either to eye or nose) than the two-legged swine who were turning the entire village into a sty, his daughter pursed her thin lips in approval. Clasping her child to her breast, she gave him a pitying look, and murmured,

"Poor little Arthur, I'm afraid he'll find it an unfriendly world . . . . . even though I do what I can to guard him against it."

Mr. Morton reached out and touched the flabby little thing, whereupon the boy opened his pale gray eyes and seized his grandfather's finger.

"Prematurely born," muttered the old paralytic, pulling away. "An abortion, precisely as this so-called nation of united states was a premature birth. Such things cannot endure. They'll both perish."

This frank prediction terrified Mrs. Pentland, but though on account of the abruptness with which her son had begun life his first years were difficult ones, he lived. True, he did not thrive. True, also, that in spite of the care with which she watched over him, he remained a frail sickly child, unquiet rather than active. He was sluggish and even dull, and always preferred his mother's lap to romping. A curious compound of obstinacy and docility, he was the most sensitive boy imaginable, detesting noise and unable to bear pain in any form. He suffered from night-terrors, as a result of which Mrs. Pentland let

him sleep with her until he was a good-sized lad.

Now this arrangement was as agreeable to the mother as to the son, for it was only Arthur's little arms about her neck which gave her courage to face the lugubrious terrors which slumber so commonly unleashed upon her. For weeks and months at a time she scarcely closed her eyes in sleep when the gory figure of her husband rose before her, the blood of battle still upon his pale and ghastly face. From such nightmares she always awoke with a scream of horror, and the boy also waking, the two would clasp each other in an ecstasy of fright.

Upon one such occasion she gasped out the details of her hideous dream, a very unwise thing to have done she afterward decided, for her little son slept no more that night. The next day he could not bear her out of his sight, and as evening came on, his anxiety returned. When she announced that it was his bedtime he shuddered violently and began to cry, and it was only by promising to retire with him that she was able to calm the child. . . . . Together they knelt at the bedside. He was

staring at the shadows cast upon the wall by the flickering candle.

"Come dear, say your little prayer."

He folded his hands and closed his eyes,

"Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die. . . . ."

"Go on, Arthur, and please don't tremble."

"But Mother, am I going to die?"

She paled a little,

"Don't be afraid, Arthur. While you sleep God comes and watches over you."

Comforted by this, he finished his prayer and clambered into bed. She got in beside him.

"Mother, does God protect me against everything?"

"Why . . . . . yes."

"And is He big and strong, Mother? Could he lift a horse?"

"Yes, of course, but do close your eyes and go to sleep like a good child."

Mrs. Pentland dozed off. . . . . Suddenly she awoke. The room had been flooded by the moon, and by means of this illumination she saw that Arthur was sitting up in bed. She hastily raised a hand, but—ah! somnambu-

lism—she kept silent, hoping that he would lie down again. In this she was disappointed, for even as she gazed, the child slowly got out of bed, his head thrown back and his eyes in a fixed stare.

"God," he whispered, "are you here? Where are you, God? Are you watching over little Arthur?"

Getting no answer to this trembling question, the boy walked to the window, as if intending to climb out. When he had stared through the glass, however, he appeared to change his mind: turning round he went out the door and up the stairs, the anxious mother close behind. Arrived at the second floor, the child passed along the hall until he came to the room occupied by his grandfather. He went in . . . . . began to walk slowly about, Mrs. Pentland meanwhile standing in the doorway with clasped hands and prayerful face. Around and around the room the sleep-walker pursued his way, around and around in a comfortless circle—all at once the grandfather started up in bed,

"What are you doing here?"

The boy turned to him with a beseeching whisper,

"Where can Arthur Pentland find God? Are you God? Tell me, are you God? Do you watch over me?"

The old man burst into a roar of laughter, but halted abruptly, for his explosive mirth had wrenched the sleepwalker from hope to despair. The child reeled back as from a blow, fell to the floor, and came to his senses with a piercing scream. Mrs. Pentland rushed to him and seized him in her arms, showering him with kisses and caresses and fond words.

IV

The mother carried the sobbing boy back to their room, but although he stopped crying when they were in bed again, his little hands kept clutching at her desperately. He pressed his lips against her breast as if suckling, and when she suggested that he would be more comfortable lying with his back to her, he screamed out that he would not face the dark, oh never! She embraced him tenderly, saying in a playful whisper,

"But you're crowding me out of bed."

He began to whimper,

"Please don't scold me. I've *got* to be close to you. I want to get inside of you, into your heart . . . . . then I'll be safe and happy."

Mrs. Pentland made no reply to this, but long after he had fallen into a restless sleep she stayed awake, pondering in her mind the meaning of the vagaries of her little son. The sleepwalking adventure, in particular, worried her a great deal, and fearing that he might become a habitual somnambulist, she decided to break up his further inclinations in this direction.

The next evening she tucked him in bed, and proceeded to fasten the doors and windows, thus turning the room into a kind of prison from which it would be difficult for the boy to escape in unawakened quest. He watched her with wide eyes,

"Mother, why are you locking us in?"

"To keep you from wandering off from me in your dreams. Don't you remember what you did last night?"

He answered slowly and solemnly,

"No. I just remember I hurt my head . . . . . but you kissed it and made it all

well again. . . . . *Must* I go walking in my dreams?"

"Certainly not," said Mrs. Pentland sharply. "You must stay in bed with me, or you will hurt yourself again."

"Yes," and when she had come to bed he hugged her tight, "I won't do it any more."

In spite of this assurance, however, he had not been asleep a half hour before he fell to twitching and moaning. Mrs. Pentland thought another somnambulistic seizure was coming upon him. She got up, found a cord, and stealthily bound his foot to the bedpost, after which she lay down again, tense with anxiety. The child had quieted. . . . . He seemed to be sleeping peacefully, when all at once he started to get out of bed. The cord brought him up with a jerk, whereupon he awoke.

"Arthur!" cried the mother, "you promised you'd not do it again, and you did."

The boy threw himself into her arms, protesting tearfully,

"Oh Mother, I didn't mean to, truly I didn't. I don't want to dream, and I don't want to leave you. Hold me tight, Mother,

then I won't be able to go. You won't let me go, will you, Mother?"

"No. . . . . No. . . . . I shan't let you go."

V

The somnambulistic impulse bothered the child for several months, and then gave way to a lethargy which oppressed him day and night. When of an evening he crawled into bed it was to sleep like a drugged thing, while during his waking hours he would sit in an apathy, hands limply folded in his lap, his lips drooping open, and his gaze fixed vacantly upon the floor. He appeared to be sunk in perpetual revery, so indifferent to what was going on about him that Mrs. Pentland had to repeat her queries in order to get a reply from him. The boy's preoccupation had begun to worry her, and when one day he gave an inarticulate answer to her question and immediately fell back into his stupor, she said firmly,

"Arthur, your coloring is bad this afternoon. I think you ought to go outside and play awhile."

"I don't want to play with the other boys."

"Why not?"

"Because they always pick on me."

"Then play by yourself. Come, if for no other reason than to please me."

The boy got up and went outside, moving dully, listlessly: he had small relish for these late autumnal days when the gloom of the morning hours is scarcely cut away by the sun before the light is veiled by the shadows of approaching evening. He began to amuse himself in subdued fashion. . . . . Presently he fell to gazing about in uneasiness, appearing to sense a presence not his own. Very gently he put down his playthings and went in to his mother.

"I am afraid," he whispered, and clutched at her dress.

"Afraid! What are you afraid of?"

They stared at each other in rigid silence, until at length the boy lowered his eyes, murmuring weakly,

"I don't know."

He had no more to say, but it was evident that his mind was still groping in the labyrinth of some nameless dread; Mrs. Pentland made

up her mind to distract his attention. Selecting *Pilgrim's Progress* as a volume combining entertainment and moral instruction, she sat down beside him and began to read aloud. Some moments went by, when the story fell upon a somber path, and along it journeyed a number of pilgrims, including Christiana and her son Joseph, and having come to about the middle of the Valley of the Shadow of Death Christiana said that she saw something approaching. Joseph questioned her as to what she saw, and she answered that it was an ugly Thing,—and a little farther on she told him that it had drawn nigh.

Having read thus far, Mrs. Pentland put down the volume combining entertainment and moral instruction, and sat in silence, gazing thoughtfully at the floor. The feeble November sun had drawn out of the room altogether; the shadows of the twilight were stealing in through the windows. Arthur was stiff as wood at his mother's side, staring at her with white face, and whispering, now, in a voice which appeared to come from a great distance,

"Mother, what was the ugly Thing?"

Mrs. Pentland roused up with a violent start, but avoided his eyes. She did not answer. The boy saw that she was trembling. He repeated his question, whereupon she muttered something which he could not understand, and hastily rose to her feet. Going to the harpsichord at the farther end of the room, she sat down and began to play, executing a selection from Scarlatti, and after that a song from Handel, entitled

Ask if yon damask rose be fair.

When she had finished this brisk music, she forced a smile to her lips and turned to her son: she could barely see him, for it was now dusk and his figure was rapidly being obscured by gloomy shade. Mrs. Pentland sprang up and went to the mantelpiece, and then she gave a little cry, for the candle which she had tried to light had guttered to its end.

VI

And in that house another candle was guttering to its end: Mr. Henry Morton, barrister.

During the first few years of what he called

his sojourn in Pittsburgh, the old gentleman had maintained an attitude of alert expectancy, steadfast in the belief that presently the nightmare of democracy would fade away before the returning realities of former times. And because the awaited dawn must not find him unready, he had himself awakened early each morning, after which he was dressed with meticulous care in the fashion of bygone days, a heavily powdered wig upon his head, knee breeches and silk stockings for his nether extremities, and for his upper parts a great purple coat lined with white satin, with cambric wrist-ruffles falling over his bloated hands. Thus arrayed he would sit by the window all day, gripping his gold-headed cane as if on the point of springing to his feet, and gazing out into the garden, where there was a sundial, symbol to him of the inevitable march toward a happier time.

But as the years went by without yielding any indication of rout among the despised democrats, he lost heart. His eyes had kept their fierce brightness, but they were filling with water, and it came to pass that when they blinked out upon the sundial, the shadows

marching round it appeared to him—oh symbol, very true, but of a sort to make his old lips tremble. The awaited dawn would not find him unready, by God, no! but meanwhile the window curtains must be kept drawn day and night, in order, as he explained, to shut out the odious, despicable, and contemptible world. A species of senile dementia had long been threatening him, and now it showed itself openly in the rambling and meaningless tone which his talk frequently assumed, and in the querulous manner in which he punctuated his recital of democracy's errors by whacking his black servant across the buttocks with his cane.

"What the devil are you staring at?" cried Mr. Morton, as one day he looked up to see his grandson in the doorway.

"I couldn't see you at first, sir."

"Nevertheless I am here," growled the old paralytic in a mournful voice, "here among the shadows. Confound you," abruptly, "come in and shut that door."

The boy did.

Old Morton sat in his armchair, a hulk of flabby meat, motionless save for the restless

eyes burning against the gloom. Restless eyes, burning eyes, hunted eyes, fastening upon Arthur Pentland with a strange tenacity. At last the grandfather leaned forward to whisper in a mocking voice,

"Well, young fellow, have you found God yet?"

The boy made no reply, whereupon the sometime barrister began to chatter in his shaky crazy way,

"Rouse up, sir! It is I who should play the long face, not you. Morton's dry as bone, and you are full of sap. You're young, you rascal, and strong, too. Getting robust, upon my oath! Um, damned queer. Still alive, aren't you? Ha ha ha ha ha! And once I predicted that you'd not outlast your swaddling clothes. Yet. . . . . By God, is this American nation likewise to endure? Are you an emblem of this damned country, beginning weakly, growing strong, destined to live, while such as I must die? No no! by Heaven, no! You lie, you dog! America shall perish! May the Devil take it for his own, the damned abortion. Ugh-h-h-h. No roots, sir, and everything so new and strange, so new . . . . .

and strange. God help me," he groaned, and let his head fall upon his breast.

Presently he looked up again, fixing the boy with a glittering eye,

"The land is young and you are young. All things have youth, except poor old Morton. Youth! that's the thing,—but the sundial never stops. While you watch it, the shadows go on marching; when you ignore it, they go on just the same, just the same, pushing you toward the abysm. But I'll not give up! By God, I'll not! Death is strong, but Life is mighty, too. Ha ha ha ha ha! Well, damn you!" he shouted all at once, "don't stand there gaping! Help your poor old grandfather! Pray for me! Pray to God Almighty to protect me against the Fleshless One! Pray!"

With chattering teeth the boy fell to his knees and began to petition God in behalf of the old man, until he heard footsteps,—then he stopped. The grandfather was loudly urging him to go on, when the door opened and Mrs. Pentland came in,

"Why Father, what is the—"

"Hush!" cried the paralyzed man, wild

mirth in his voice. "Behold age being interceded for by youth! I, the barrister, once pleading the cause of others, am now the prisoner at the bar! Ha ha ha ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha! Forward, young one!"

Arthur got to his feet and started for his mother, but the old man reached out and seized him.

"Aha!" he leered, and drew the shrinking boy up close. "Why do you try to escape me? I have you fast. Wonderful! The mere pulse of your wrist warms my old blood. Blood! They think to ease me by opening a vein and taking blood from me, but that is nonsense. I have a better way! I'll grip you tight like this, and strength will flow from you to me, then I shall live on and on and on. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!"

Mrs. Pentland begged her father to be quiet, but he would not. Without appearing to notice the terror of the boy squirming in his grip, he fell to talking in smothered excitement, hastening from one subject to another with the air of one who seeks to keep an unwelcome caller in the antechamber under pretext of being occupied with present visitors.

Thinking to relieve the apprehension which was every moment more plain upon his jerking face, the daughter lighted a pair of candles,—in vain. With his eyes roving from one feeble flame to the other, he gabbled on and on, mixing American politics and English hedgerows, muttering of daffodils and legal papers, of rooks and country lanes and a favorite hound, of childhood days and a cousin long since dead, and this last seeming to establish a link with reality, he raised his voice in a despairing cry,

"My God! Is this the end of Henry Morton?"

He buried his face in his hands, and the boy, released from his grip, made haste to get behind his mother.

She,

"Run for the doctor, Arthur!"

At this old Morton raised his head with a gurgle of horror, his tongue wobbling in and out of his mouth as he struggled for words.

"The Fleshless One!" he at last managed to gasp out. "He's out there, waiting to come in! I forbid you to open that door!"

"Go, Arthur!" cried Mrs. Pentland, and threw the door wide open.

The boy dashed out of the room and down the stairs, but when he tried to open the street door there was no strength or sensation in his hand, the hand which the old paralytic had gripped so tightly. At that moment a loud cry came to him, the cry of a man in mortal agony, followed by the sobbing of a woman, mourning. Arthur Pentland sank to the floor, murmuring dully,

"It's taken him. . . . . The Fleshless One has taken him."

VII

It was not long after the death of old Morton that Mrs. Pentland noticed the tendency of her son to avoid the upper part of the house. She asked him about it.

"Because it smells bad," he muttered.

"Smells bad! You are certainly imagining that. The second floor is as fresh and airy as these rooms."

"I feel it in my nose."

"Nonsense."

"It is a horrible odor, and it comes from grandfather's room."

"Arthur!"

But he went on obstinately,

"It is big like a cloud, and brown, and heavy. It crushes me. Sometimes it is a knife and cuts my skin and lets out my blood. That's why my wrist is paralyzed."

The mother had turned pale as milk during this halting speech, but when he had finished, she said sternly,

"Your wrist is perfectly all right, and you know it. Furthermore, there is no such odor as you describe . . . . . but if you like . . . . . please close the door."

He obeyed in silence . . . . . came back to her side. She was sewing. After a while he gazed up at her slyly.

"Mother," he whispered, "it is coming through the closed door."

With a nervous little laugh Mrs. Pentland darted a look at the door,

"Now Arthur, stop imagining such ridiculous things."

"I'm not imagining it," he insisted. "It is really so. I can feel it wriggling down into

my stomach. It stops there and makes me all weak and sick."

"That's your indigestion. You've had it ever since you were a baby."

"It's not my indigestion," was the sullen retort. "It comes from the other side of the door, and it is like . . . . . like . . . . . ."

"Like what?"

"Like an ugly Thing."

The mother sprang up so abruptly as to spill her sewing upon the floor,

"Arthur Pentland! Your foolishness is upsetting me as well as yourself. Come, we'll go for a walk. We both need the air, I'm afraid."

VIII

Not far from their house was a hill known as Flare's Knob, and there went Mrs. Pentland and her son. Half way up the ascent they paused for a mouthful of the cool water that came bubbling out from a spring, and then they slowly went on to the top, and sat down to rest and to look out over the surrounding country.

It was a pleasant landscape, diversified by

mountain and valley, slope and level stretch, a green immensity through which the turnpike came winding from afar. To-day the highway was alive, alive with feet and wheels and the cries of men and beasts, all ranged in west-going procession, stubbornly pushing to the west, steadily westward. In creaking carts they came, in vans, in huge Conestoga wagons, too, rude vehicles behind which marched long strings of pack horses, and behind the pack horses droves of lowing cattle, and behind the cattle shrill urchins and yapping dogs, the rear guard of the motley immigrant train. On and on they came, a steady stream under a banner of curling dust, nearer and nearer the village, past an Indian encampment on a grassy knoll, and on to Pittsburgh itself, immigrants heading west.

Mrs. Pentland had been thoughtful for some moments, for in gazing upon the scene spread out before her, it had occurred to her that a moral lesson might be drawn from the spectacle of the three rivers adjacent to the village. Accordingly she asked her son to notice that the waters of the Allegheny were crystal clear, while those of the Monongahela

were muddy, and that as the two streams merged to form the Ohio, the struggle between them was a kind of warfare between Good and Evil, from which observation she proceeded to point out to Arthur the error of yielding to fancy and delusive imagination, lest these vices befoul the current of his nobler self.

Homilies of this sort were very much to the liking of Mrs. Pentland, but the boy found them less agreeable, especially when he himself was their object. He grew restless under her talk of fancy and vices and currents, but she chattered on and on and on and on, until at length not even she could help seeing his resentment,—and then she left off with exhortation and turned to anecdotes of her youthful days in Philadelphia, thinking to soothe him.

The child had always shown the greatest interest in tales of the olden time, and now he quieted to rapt attention while she described the fashionable strolls along Chestnut Street, the incessant tea drinkings, and the gay balls with army officers and statesmen and distinguished French visitors in attendance. With eye sparkling in reminiscence she spoke

of how as a young girl she had ridden to hounds with her father, and then her voice was bathed in tenderness, for it told of a never-to-be-forgotten day when as a visitor at the horse races, she sat between Colonel Washington and Lord Stirling, and hearing a strange voice, looked up to see, for the first time, the memorable figure of Ralph Pentland. But that name had opened the floodgates of sorrowful reflection, and with a little sigh she fell silent, until

"What is it, Arthur?"

The answer came in low and halting tones: one day he had been playing on this hill with another boy—they found a heap of fleshless bones—his playmate said they belonged to some soldiers—massacred here—long ago.

"And are they my father's bones?" he asked.

A shudder ran over Mrs. Pentland,

"Certainly not! What could have put such an idea into your head?"

"He said so."

"Nonsense."

"He said it was my father without any flesh on his bones. He said I would be that way

some day. He said the Fleshless One will come and get me, too, and take me and make me like himself."

"Be silent!"

She turned toward him with an angry gesture,—and gasped in alarm, for her son lay upon the ground as if borne down by an overpowering weight. The muscles of his face had contracted, his breathing had quickened, while his pale gray eyes were fixed upon the mother in a wide unseeing stare. He tried to speak, but was unable to expel a single word through his dry and feverish lips. In a frenzy of anxiety Mrs. Pentland bent over him, and as she did so, there broke upon her ears the plunging tumultuous beating of his heart.

"Arthur!" she screamed, and half lifted, half dragged him to his feet.

With a shaking hand she wiped the cold sweat from his forehead, and made haste to bring out the little bottle of hartshorn which was her constant companion. She begged him to sniff at it—do, Arthur dear, please—but he only pushed it away and gave a little moan, and whispered, very very softly, that he

wanted to go home. On their way back to the house she hovered over him with a thousand questions as to how he felt and why, to which the boy replied in listless monosyllables or not at all. . . . . That evening she insisted that he go to bed early, and when she had carefully tucked him in, and arranged the pillows under his tossing head, she asked him to say his prayer and go to sleep like the good child that he was.

"It is no use to pray."

"What!" and the mother recoiled in amazement.

"It's no use, I tell you! I prayed to Him to keep grandfather from the Fleshless One, and He didn't. I asked Him to make it stop thundering and lightning, because I was afraid, and He didn't."

"Hush!" broke in Mrs. Pentland, her thin face losing every trace of color.

"But He never answers my prayers! He picks on me all the time! He lets me get hurt! He lets things scare me!"

"Not another word! You are getting to be a very perverse child. I shan't tolerate

it. Say your prayer at once . . . . . or I shall never kiss you again."

He said his prayer.

IX

He said his prayer, but the next day found him lounging about the house with face wrinkled in deep thought; now and then he roused up to level a long hard glance at his mother. There was something cold and suspicious in his gaze, but when she tried to find out what he was thinking about, he petulantly snatched up his cap and left the house. Through the garden and to the gate,—a moment's hesitation and he set off down town, walking briskly until he came to a storehouse where a carter was loading hogsheads into a wagon. The boy halted,

"Could you lift a horse?"

The carter stared, burst into a guffaw,

"Well now, lad, that's a good un. Lift a hoss, eh? I've heerd tell o' chaps what could, but it allus turned out to be all talk and no cider. Did ye ever see it done?"

"No, but I've been told that—"

"Oho! An' ye've been told there's a Santy

Claus, too, I'll be vowed. I'm the strongest cuss in these here parts, and I can't lift no hoss, and neither can anybody else. Don't ye believe such lies, youngster."

With this advice he returned to his hogsheads, leaving Arthur Pentland to turn on his heel and stride off home. He kept silent all afternoon, but as his mother rose from the supper table, he asked abruptly,

"Is a carter very strong?"

"Oh yes, there is no one stronger than a carter."

The boy burst into laughter, an occurrence so rare that Mrs. Pentland gazed at him in pleased surprise,

"How glad I am to hear you laugh again! I've been afraid something was troubling you."

"There was something," rejoined the boy, forcing his laughter to a still higher pitch, "but no more! Ha ha ha ha ha!"

She embraced him affectionately,

"Oh! I'm *so* glad to have you say that, Arthur. You see, dear, we simply *must* bear in mind that we can't enjoy any peace until we throw off our troubles. Besides, it is ridicu-

lous to take them seriously, for most of them are imaginary as Santa Claus, and not half as pleasant. It is our duty to *refuse* to believe in such things. If we steadfastly neglect to think or speak of them, they will end up by disappearing! The way to be happy is to think of happy things, and ignore all else."

He nodded in agreement, whispering slowly,

"I must think of happy things . . . . . and ignore all else . . . . . because it is a lie."

Suddenly he burst into tears, weeping so wildly and passionately that the fond-hearted mother was quite beside herself. She kissed him and hugged him and told him he was her own precious boy, but curiously enough this only made him sob more violently,—then he stopped crying as suddenly as he had begun.

Why was Arthur sad?

"I am not sad," he answered. "I don't know why I was crying."

"But boys of your age don't cry without good reason," returned the puzzled mother. "Something must have grieved you, dear.

Was it because I didn't feel like playing on the harpsichord for you last night?"

"No."

"Was it because you miss poor dear grandfather?"

The boy's face changed subtly.

"No!" he broke out. "I don't miss him. I'm glad the Fleshless One took him, because now you shall love no one but me."

X

Mrs. Pentland was shocked to have her Arthur say he was glad the old grandfather was dead, at the same time she made no attempt to conceal her pleasure at his desire to monopolize her affections. On the contrary, she seized every opportunity to assure him that all of her love was for him, and for no one else, not even the tiniest part of it. He believed her, and as a consequence no ripple came to disturb the tranquillity of his devotion, —until he was twelve years of age.

In August of that year, 1793, news of a virulent outbreak of yellow fever in Philadelphia reached the village of Pittsburgh. The news was received with dismay, for although

the town lay far from the scene which was being ravaged by the disease, it was feared that refugees from the stricken city might bring the plague along with them, and thus, while intent upon preserving their own lives, infect an innocent population. Fear! Consternation! How guard against the menace? Every family must lay in a stock of garlic, nitre, camphor, and other homely remedies! Quick!

Mrs. Pentland hastily dispatched her son to the apothecary shop. He bought the precious drugs, and paused to listen to a knot of townspeople who had got hold of a somewhat recent newspaper: it gave numerous and vivid details of the gruesome drama being enacted in the eastern metropolis. The wide-eyed boy drank in every word with avidity, a cold perspiration starting from his skin, and when the gossips had dispersed he hurried home, mumbling, with that fascination which so often obliged us to gloat over horrible things,

"Yellow fever, yellow fever. The apothecary said it's 'most always fatal. Sometimes it takes every member of the family. They

all die. The bells toll all day and all night. Hearses all over the streets. When people go out, they keep to the windward of each other. They build bonfires to purify the air. They must be sure to sniff handkerchiefs soaked in vinegar. Then they die. They have a bad smell, a brown smell like grandfather. It flies on wings. Pretty soon it will get to Pittsburgh. People will begin to die. Then they will be like the Fleshless One. Oh! oh! oh!"

Muttering in this disjointed fashion he got home, but when he stumbled into the living room his mother was not there . . . . . not there . . . . . dull misery surged into his eyes . . . . . not there . . . . . where was she? He gazed heavily about. . . . . With white face and chattering teeth he dragged himself up the stairs. Pushing open the door of her room he stepped in,—and halted to stare in surprise, for Mrs. Pentland was sitting on the floor with a bundle of letters in her lap, a guilty flush on her face. She had taken down the long wavy brown hair which had formerly been her chief glory; at the unexpected entrance of her son she hastily pinned it up.

His eyes had narrowed in suspicion,

"What have you got there?"

By this time the mother had got back her composure, and was tying up the tattered sheets with a faded ribbon.

"Merely some old letters," she explained. "They were written to me long ago by a Mr. Crawford, an old childhood friend in Philadelphia. I'm afraid he has fallen a victim to the yellow fever."

The boy's face filled with dark blood. He burst out passionately,

"I hope he has! I do! I do! I do!"

In a paroxysm of rage he kicked and struck the bedpost again and again, accusing his mother of disloyalty, screaming out that she no longer loved him, and repeating over and over that she actually wished him dead, so that she could give all of her affection to the hated one in Philadelphia. In vain did the weeping mother beg him to be reasonable. Mr. Crawford, she insisted, was an old friend, and it was natural that she be somewhat concerned for his safety at a time when the plague was sweeping his native city. In vain all this, the boy would not listen. He wept and raged

and said some very unpleasant things, and at length he tore himself from her clawing hands and rushed from the room.

Down the stairs he dashed, out the door, and away along the river bank, plunging through puddles of mud and scratching himself in thickets. He tore his hair and ground his teeth upon the loathsome name of Crawford, all the while assuring the calm summer day that he hoped his accursed rival would die of yellow fever and go to Hell and be thrown head first into a cauldron of boiling lead. All this and much more, but presently his frenzy passed away,—leaving him weak and listless. He paused, looked heavily about, and circled back toward the village. For more than an hour he wandered around, drearily, aimlessly, and then to ease the trembling in his legs, he sat down.

Across the street stood a tavern, and presently he heard a racket and saw the door burst open: the landlord and a pair of travellers hurtled out, locked in what at first sight appeared to be one of those loving embraces which so often accompany leave-taking. The words which went with this pantomime, how-

ever, showed it to have less to do with affection than with the wayfarers' objection to paying for what they didn't get—or were they lying? A number of idlers strolled up to watch the fun, but Arthur Pentland paid no attention. Up and down the rutted street oxen were lurching with their heavy carts, but the boy saw them not. All about him the air was ringing with the sound of hammer and saw and axe, as new buildings took shape under the hands of workmen, yet he was oblivious to this, also. He seemed to be in the world but not of it, and it was only when the rays of the westering sun fell upon his face that he roused up.

Slowly he got to his feet, gazing about as one benumbed by dull and sick despair. The sun sank lower, and now the creeping shadows startled him out of his coma. With his head jerking restlessly from side to side he set off toward home, walking faster and faster as the light fled away before the oncoming twilight, until within sight of the gate he began to run as if all the fiends of the black and unknown night were at his heels.

Garden, porch, door—rushed into the

house and seized his mother in his arms. Covering her with tears and kisses, he filled her ear with protestations of love and begged her to forgive him for what he'd said and done, but hadn't meant, and she in turn caressed and fondled him as some precious thing which had been lost and now was found, assuring him, with trembling lips, that it was she, and not he, who must plead for forgiveness. The boy nestled to her with a delicious little shiver, his voice full of awe and wonder,

"Mother darling, it was like a terrible blackness to run out of the house and leave you like that. There's no light, no happiness, no world without you. Everything is horrid when I am away from you, and when I am with you, tight in your arms like this, everything is glorious, wonderful. I want nothing but you, darling mother, nothing but you and your love. . . . . and that is all I shall ever need, isn't it?"

"Dear, dear Arthur, how I love you."

XI

Dear, dear Arthur, how she loved him! Loved him, and guarded him against the im-

pacts of the unfriendly world, for though the passing years changed the frail boy into a strong youth at least a head taller than herself, he was still her little Arthur, her baby, her darling, so superior to other young men, so different. . . . .

"What a pleasant life we lead," she murmured one day. They were returning from a stroll with their arms full of cherry blossoms.

A pleasant life, yes.

"But dear me," she continued, "you are growing up fast. I suppose it will be only a matter of time before you marry, and abandon your poor mother to despair and loneliness."

Never!

"And of course," sighing carefully, "of course it will be one of these modern girls. Modern they may be," she went on severely, "but the word indecent fits them better. The present state of feminine dress is not only in very poor taste, it is actually immoral. Why, it's loathsome, revolting! In my day, there was some notion of modesty, but nowadays it seems they actually want to display their

ankles. Yes, and more than that. It was only last week that I saw a creature on the street with short sleeves and arms entirely bare! When I was a girl, Arthur, it was considered decorous, if not actually imperative, to wear at least two petticoats, and often as many as six, but at the present time it is the mode to lay aside such articles altogether, and to dress as thinly as possible *à la Française*. Why, when one of these young ladies of fashion gets between the eye and the sun with her shameful gauze and muslin, it is enough to make well-bred people look in another direction. Oh dear! it is dreadful to think that you will be ensnared by such a—"

"Oh wait," he interrupted. "Let me help you."

They were turning in their own gate, and Mrs. Pentland's dress had caught on a picket. There was an odd gleam in her eyes as he bent to release her, and as they went on up the gravelled path, she said in a tight thin voice,

"You are as chivalrous as your father, Arthur, and as handsome. You have the same straight hair, the same gray eyes, the same

clear-cut features. Your jaw, though, is more tenacious than his: that part of your face is more like Grandfather Morton. How I shall miss you when you leave me for—"

"Mother!"

"But certainly you intend to marry?"

"Mother dear, I assure you I shall never marry. I shall be a bachelor and stay with you always."

With this he politely opened the door for her, and they went in. Mrs. Pentland put down her blossoms carelessly, intent, not upon a vase of water, but upon the lithe straight-standing youth who had followed her into the living room.

"Would it please you to stay with me always?" she murmured.

"Nothing could please me more. Why, mother, don't you know that you are everything to me, everything! Other people are so neutral and uninteresting; they irritate me when we are with them. I am on tenterhooks until I have you all to myself again. I cannot account for it in any other way than that you, and you alone, are necessary to my complete happiness."

She threw her arms about his neck and kissed him on the mouth, kissed him warmly. Her eyes, ordinarily a soft brown, had deepened in color until they were a wet glistening black, and her thin nostrils flared in suppressed excitement as she whispered tensely,

"Are you sure?"

"Of what?"

"That you'll never love another woman?"

He gazed down upon her in bepuzzlement, his lips curling to a careless smile,

"Quite sure, Mother. I have given you all of my love,—how then is there any for any one else? Pshaw, I could never be attracted by the brazen creatures you've been talking about. And besides, you yourself are my sweetheart, and one far more lovely and charming than any other woman could possibly be."

XII

Mrs. Pentland declared that all this was an exaggeration, nevertheless she redoubled her efforts to enhance her personal charms. Fortunately she had never shown a tendency toward stoutness, and though her bust had insisted upon falling, the adroit arrangement

of a strong pair of corsets encouraged it to rise again, until in bulk at least it was quite the equal of a much younger bosom. Her hair was graying, but the contents of a bottle ordered from New York persuaded it to remain brown, while the use of certain small articles of tin enabled it to stay extraordinarily curly by day, whatever it may have looked like by night.

As the result of a maidenly swoon many years before, her left temple showed a small scar, but since Arthur declared that this actually added to her good looks, she did not try to conceal it. It was this, his penchant for compliments, which brought a winning smile to her otherwise thin and unattractive lips, and which did much more than herb lotions to bring a tingling color back into her cheeks. Middle age had sent her the usual wrinkles, but those in her neck did not show very plainly, and as for the creases about her eyes diligence and long hours erased them altogether.

All of these endeavors bore fruit in the form of a still greater devotion from her son, and it was with secret satisfaction that she realized

his lack of interest in other women to be no idle talk. As a matter of fact, her power over him was complete, and in proportion as she became convinced of this, she took pains slyly to extend over the youth that dominating influence which she had maintained over the child, and to instill into his mind the conservatism which had become more and more characteristic of her as she grew older.

"I suppose I am old-fashioned," she sighed one day, "but to see the nineteenth century open with the triumph of this Jefferson is really enough to make one shudder with foreboding. I used to think your grandfather was unduly pessimistic about the future of the country, but I must say," pulling down the corners of her mouth, "that if our presidents are to become progressively democratic, we may expect the worst. Don't you think so, Arthur?"

"I do indeed, Mother."

She smoothed her skirts until they gave out a faint rustle of silk, and went on primly,

"It seems to me that the aim of the democrats is to deliver us over to anarchy and pandemonium. They intend to force us to

submit to the control of an ignorant and illiterate rabble. In my opinion, this election paves the way for the destruction of the last vestiges of culture and civilization. What is your opinion, Arthur?"

Arthur's opinion was that it was a most unfortunate development.

"Doubly so," went on Mrs. Pentland, and raised her eyes from her embroidery to give him a significant look.

He left off caressing the little black moustache which had lately appeared upon him,

"I beg your pardon?"

"In less than a year you will be twenty-one, my dear, and hence entitled to the ballot. But what a discouraging situation, now that the political outlook has become so hopeless. Why really, it is enough to make one lose all interest in politics."

The little moustache received several very firm and decisive strokes,

"It is certainly causing me to lose interest in the elective process. . . . . I think I'll simply neglect to use my vote. I have no desire to mingle with an ignorant and illiterate rabble simply for the purpose of trying to

influence the political fortunes of a country with which I have so little in common."

Mrs. Pentland put down her work to nod approval.

"I shan't blame you," she said. "Nothing is to be gained from mixing with all these vulgar affairs. Thank Heaven your grandfather's investments are yielding so comfortable an income that it won't be necessary for you to enter politics or any other profession for the sake of the money. We shall have to go on living here, in order to look out for our land interests, but at least we can live to ourselves. One can do so, of course, just as one can shut out bad air by closing the windows."

"An excellent illustration," cried the son. "When the world turns foul, one can, to use a figure of speech, close the windows and stay indoors. It seems to me that is true wisdom. Yes, I quite agree with you, Mother. Close the windows, that's it, precisely!"

XIII

And so, to use a figure of speech, they closed the windows and stayed indoors, shut-

ting out the rude and barbarous world and creating a little universe of their own, wherein the years passed happily, a succession of bland summers, unheeded fragments of time flowing softly as a tranquil river.

Mrs. Pentland was quite content, and well she might be, for no woman could have had a more devoted son. A gallant son, likewise, of manners so meticulously correct that she was in the habit of referring to him as *factus homo*, a phrase which she translated as "a gentleman to the finger tips." *Factus homo*, of medium stature and fairly robust, carrying himself stiffly erect and inclined to hitch his shoulders nervously. *Factus homo*, with features strongly cast, the hair jet black, the mouth sensitive yet firm, in short a handsome face,—a strong face, too, save for the eyes, which were strangely light in color, a pale clear gray. He dressed conservatively, and in general had the tastes of a former generation.

At the age of thirty-five he quoted Horace with the flourish of a man a dozen years his senior, and when he took liquor he preferred a mild claret or sherry to the more potent

French and Spanish brandies. Usually he drank in great moderation, but when mentally disturbed he was likely to imbibe to excess. Mrs. Pentland had learned to regard his use of the decanter as a kind of barometer, so that when at table one evening he had indulged rather freely, she noted the fact with motherly concern. As they passed into the library arm in arm, she murmured,

"What is troubling you, Arthur?"

He gave a jerky little laugh,

"I hardly know. It is something I dreamt last night. No doubt it's silly, nevertheless it has clung to me all day."

Mrs. Pentland thoughtfully lit the candles on the mantelpiece, and took a chair, waving him toward another.

"Thank you," he said, "but I prefer to walk up and down a little, if you don't mind. It eases me, somehow."

He fell to pacing to and fro, followed by the affectionate gaze of his mother. After a moment he continued,

"You see . . . . . well, it is very obscure, and perfect nonsense, I suppose, but last night a most extraordinary dream came to me. It

seems that as I lay in bed there gathered over me an impalpable mass, a weighty bulk having neither color nor form, neither outline nor substance, yet bearing down upon me with indescribable oppression. A species of suffocation descended upon me,—it was really horrid. I was powerless to move my limbs or to raise my voice in order to call to you for help, then at the very instant that this strange burden seemed to me unendurable, it changed into a whirling chaos, turbulent, seething in frightful confusion, a turmoil in which I was hurled to and fro in most nauseating fashion, until subtly it all resolved itself into. . . . . Oh how ridiculous, don't you think so?"

"Go on."

"Very well. This mass or whatever it was, seemed to change under my very eyes into a definite form, taking on the outlines of a human being, a man. I saw him quite distinctly, really. He was very large, broad in the shoulders, with blond hair and gray eyes, though of a shade somewhat darker than my own. His complexion was ruddy, and there was about him something indescribably powerful and compelling, indeed his very gaze

seemed to pry me out of bed and to my feet, causing me—"

"It is your somnambulism again."

"No, Mother, I don't think so. I'm *positive* I haven't walked in my sleep since I was a small boy. The experience of last night does not appear to me to be somnambulistic. Curiously enough, it was more as if I were awakening from dream to reality, for the most vivid and glorious appearance settled upon everything which I saw or touched. It was a kind of ecstasy in which I was a minute fragment in a vast and mysterious pattern, but a pattern vaguely frightening, severe and repellent, so that I held back from it,—whereupon it all vanished, and I awoke in a cold sweat."

The mother seemed on the point of speaking, when with a little laugh he turned his pale eyes upon her and went on,

"Absurd, no doubt, and yet all day I have had the strangest sensation of jerkiness, of a rhythm in my legs, as if . . . . . as if I were about to go travelling."

Mrs. Pentland gave a little cry, but he hastened to reassure her,

"No, it isn't that either, or at least it is

not travel in the commonly understood sense of the term. It is rather a kind of impulse to a quest, a journey without travelling, a ridiculous statement, of course. Pshaw! the entire notion is highly fantastical, for no one could be more opposed to roaming than I. My world lies within four walls, with you, dear mother, and I am content, wishing nothing more. A few books, the pungent odor of the wood fire, the harpsichord, and you as my queen. Why! I am a king, a god, a perfectly happy man. . . . . I wonder why such an impulse to be journeying should come to me, of all people. Why do you suppose it is, Mother?"

"It is no doubt your Muse," was the bland explanation. "Like your father, you are poetical by nature, and all this is simply material to be used for verses. Your father, as I have told you many times, wrote delightful rhymes. Perhaps you are destined to follow in his footsteps."

With a nervous hitch of his shoulders the son paused. He twisted the ends of his moustache for a thoughtful moment, and smiled wanly,

"Perhaps so. . . . . How amusing that

would be . . . . . to turn one's dreams into poetry!"

He had no sooner said this than he burst into a fit of hysterical laughter.

"My dear Arthur!" cried Mrs. Pentland, "you are letting these fancies upset you. Put them out of your mind, do! Let me read to you."

"As you like," he muttered, and sank weakly into a chair.

She went to the bookshelves, and turned to ask,

"What would you like, dear?"

"Paradise Lost."

"But . . . . . that is so . . . . . so devoid of light. Wouldn't you prefer Addison or Steele, or maybe this new volume sent us by Mr. Crawford?"

"Mr. Crawford?" and he looked up sharply.

"Yes dear, he sent it last week, don't you remember? Or perhaps I forgot to mention it. It is a book by a new author. Mr. Crawford thinks he has some talent. Let me read a little of it. It is a history of New York, by a Mr. Knickerbocker."

Pentland reached for the decanter but made

no reply, and the mother, interpreting his silence as consent, sat down and began to read. She had learned not to expect too consistent an attention from her son, but this evening his mind appeared more than ordinarily distraught, and at length she paused,

"But you are not listening."

He gave a start,

"I beg your pardon . . . . . but really, it's rather silly, isn't it? Old books are best."

She closed the volume,

"I quite agree with you. Old books are best. Somehow old things are always best: old books, old furniture, old customs, old friends. In all of our years here in Pittsburgh I have never made the acquaintance of any one as truly deserving of friendship as Mr. Crawford."

The son poured himself another drink,

"He has been on your mind a great deal lately."

Mrs. Pentland flushed, and hastily picked up her embroidery. With her eyes upon her work, she murmured hesitatingly,

"It is true, and I hope you will not misunderstand what I wish to say to you."

"I shall be glad to listen," was the cool rejoinder.

"Mr. Crawford and I were children together," pursued the mother. "I have not seen him for more than thirty-five years. He is only an old friend, of course—certainly nothing more, I assure you—but. . . . . Well, to come to the heart of the matter, Mr. Crawford wants to pay us a visit in the near future. He has always shown great interest in you, Arthur. I know you and he will prove great friends when you—"

"I do not make friends easily," said Pentland, and got up to kick the andirons back into the fireplace.

A sly obstinacy crept into the mother's voice,

"I know you don't, but you will find Mr. Crawford very nice, I'm very very sure. Come, Arthur, I confess that I want to invite him to come, though of course I shan't if you are going to distress me by offering violent objections."

The andirons received another kick apiece, but Pentland's words came evenly,

"Violent objections? Certainly not! Do

have him come, by all means. Yes, of course, of course. Why not?"

XIV

It was some days later that Mrs. Pentland sat reading her son a letter which had arrived only that afternoon.

"According to this, he will be here on Friday. If we—why Arthur! what is the matter? Are you ill?"

He leaned back in his chair with closed eyes.

"I—I, why yes," he murmured. "I feel a little faint—dizzy—rub my forehead if you don't mind—I think that will help."

He thought it would, but it didn't, for the very touch of her hand brought a cry of anguish to his twisting lips,—curious about these faint dizzy spells, very. He grew worse. Also, his temper went the way of his strange malady, and when for the third time Mrs. Pentland offered him her all-powerful hartshorn, it was only by biting his lip in several places that he kept back words which (had he let them out) would have added nothing to his reputation as *factus homo*.

Next morning he did not get up, but lay

in bed, pale and listless, his burning eyes following the mother as she moved about the room, and his hoarse voice protesting in sudden anger if she left his side for more than a few moments. Monday and Tuesday passed, Wednesday came, and still the sufferer kept to his bed. Thursday arrived, and at last Friday dawned.

Was he better?

No, he was worse.

"Oh dear," said Mrs. Pentland, affecting a sigh, "this is so upsetting. Mr. Crawford will be *so* sorry to find you in bed. He is arriving this afternoon, you know."

"Yes!" exclaimed her son, with sudden force. "How time flies! Here it is already Friday. We are about to see each other face to face . . . . . face to face. I hope he will be in good health!"

She gave him a slow curious smile,

"That is very sweet of you, and—"

"And what?"

"I was just thinking," she went on, gazing out of the window. "The trip from Philadelphia is so long and rough, and the stage-coaches so uncomfortable, that he will prob-

ably be very tired when he arrives. Our own carriage is so much more easy that—"

"Quite true," broke in her son, wetting his feverish lips. "Our own carriage is so much more easy! I suggest that we drive out to *The Sign of The Red Lion* and meet him. Horses are changed there for the dash into Pittsburgh. He could get in and return with us; that would be more comfortable for him than riding in the stagecoach."

"That is precisely what I was thinking of," said Mrs. Pentland, still gazing out of the window. "But I am wondering if it would be proper for me to drive out to meet him."

"Ha ha ha ha ha! Go to meet him while I lie abed like this? He'd think me a child! Certainly! you'll not go without me. I am going with you."

"But you are ill!"

"I'm feeling better, thank you."

"No, my dear, you must stay in bed. I'll go alone."

"The trip will do me good. Besides, it will afford me the satisfaction of being present when you greet him. Please send George to

me. I'll dress at once. We must start right after lunch."

XV

Mrs. Pentland appeared at luncheon in a new gown of dove gray, scented with lavender. There was considerable color in her cheeks, and her hair had been curled and looped down on the left to conceal the scar on her temple. She asked her son how she looked, and when he said that she looked extremely well, she simpered a little and declared that he was a flatterer. He made no reply, and when the meal was over, he silently escorted her to where the horses stood waiting. With elaborate politeness he handed her into the carriage, and seated himself at her side.

"How stately our old brick house is getting to look," smiled Mrs. Pentland. "It is quite as handsome as many of the old mansions in Philadelphia."

"No doubt," said the son dryly, and took the reins from the servant.

They set out.

It was a day in late autumn, one of those melancholy and disquieting days when the eye searches in vain for even a pale wan sun.

From horizon to horizon the heavens were a vast sweep of murky grayness, a dull immensity under which the earth lay inert and bloodless. The ground was cold and bare, ragged with vegetation long past bloom, faded relics that shivered at the approach of the wind, the restless capricious drifting wind. A few leaves still clung to the parent stem, but for the most part the trees were naked, and very still: there was no sound save the rattle of dry branch against dry branch, this and the whine of the wheels of the Pentland carriage.

"I hope the sun will shine again," murmured the mother, and drew her cloak about her shoulders.

"Eh?" exclaimed Arthur, jerking round. "Oh yes, to be sure."

The carriage rolled on, slow, sedate, the son absently flicking the rumps of the horses with his whip, the mother chatting with animation,

"Won't he be surprised to have us come to meet him?"

"Um, I quite agree."

At that moment the air was pierced by the blast of a horn.

Mrs. Pentland sat up stiffly,

"It's the horn of the stagecoach, isn't it? I'm afraid the driver is signalling the passengers to take their places. They must have arrived at *The Sign of The Red Lion* in early season. They're about to set out again."

The horn sounded a second time.

"Quick!" cried the mother. "Whip up the horses, or we'll be too late."

With a cry Arthur Pentland raised the whip and brought it down upon the horses with a smart blow. The animals sprang forward, dashing round a sharp curve to where the turnpike ran up a steep hill. Racing toward them there then appeared, half way down this precipitous slope, four great black horses foaming wet, drawing at breakneck speed a stagecoach which swayed wildly from side to side. The driver saw that the Pentland carriage was in his way, but though he strained madly to check his descent, it was too late.

A Charm Against The Fleshless One

I

ALL night long he paced the floor. . . . .

Dawn came, and presently a ray of sunlight crept through the window to fall upon the features of the haggard and unquiet one. He halted his fretful feet, poured a glass of brandy down his throat, and with his hands behind his back went on striding back and forth, his furtive gaze upon the floor.

The light of the new fresh day glowed warm, glowed bright and brighter, until it showed him plainly: his hair was a tangled black confusion, his pale eyes were colorless as glass, his lips sagged with pain, the dainty little moustache stood out grotesque against that wretched pallid face. He gave a little moan . . . . . whirled to see a negro servant come into the room.

"Didn't yo' git no sleep las' night, Mast' Ahthuh?"

Pentland's bloodshot eyes sent out a glimmer.

"Sleep!" he echoed hollowly. "Sleep!"

The servant bowed and said something about breakfast.

No. Get out. Leave me alone.

The negro went away.

Pentland had wanted to be alone, and yet as he listened to the footsteps fading down the hall, his uneasiness grew, and grew. Anxiety pulsed into his face. . . . . He brought his dull uncertain eyes to a bit of embroidery which lay unfinished upon a little table, shuddered, turned on his heel and strode out the door, into another room, and from there to yet another and another, threading the deserted house in vague torment and anguish, a hunted creature wandering, roaming, but finding no peace. All the weary day thus striding, then twilight soft and creeping dusk, and after that the twisting and lugubrious shadows of the night. Suddenly he paused, gazed about fearfully, and gave a bitter cry,

"George!"

The black man came running in.

"In God's name," cried Pentland, "what is it? There! I hear it again!"

The servant listened . . . . . grinned,

"Ho! Masteh, dat's jes' a hoss sneezin'. Yo' sho' ain't skeered of a hoss, is yo'?"

"A horse? . . . . Damn you, what are you staring at me for? Light the rest of those candles, every one of them."

With a convulsive sigh he sank into a chair and held his hands to the fire blazing on the hearth,

"Another log! God! how cold it is . . . . . cold, cold, cold. You rascal, I said two logs. Put on another."

The sweating black did as he was told, and slipped out of the room, leaving the master huddled before the fire, fretting his hands and muttering disjointedly.

In a little while the servant came back with a tray of food,

"Mast' Ahthuh, yo' ain't had nothin' to eat fo' de longes' time Ah don' know. Kate she made dis toast fo' yo', an' I fix dis tea mahself. Jes' look at dem peaches, ain't dey grandoyous? Yo' jes' try one o' dem, Masteh."

Pentland was sniffing at the tray. . . . . His eyes widened,

"You scoundrel! how dare you bring me food with that horrible odor?"

"Fo' de Lo'd," protested the astonished servant, "Ah swears dis am good eatin'. It don' have no bad smell, Masteh, Lo'd bless yo', it don'."

"Take it away! Throw it out—and listen! You will have the house aired to-morrow, the entire house, or be flogged to an inch of your life. I tell you there's a foul odor, a thick brown smell that . . . . . that. . . . . Lock up, and make sure you bar every window on the lower floor."

He dragged himself to his feet and began to stride up and down before the fire, while the crestfallen George examined the windows to make sure they were securely fastened. . . . . With a gasp the slave bounded back into the center of the room.

"Confound you—"

"Masteh! Dare's somebody out dare by de missus's grave!"

"What!"

"Ah swears fo' de Lo'd dey is. Ah seed him jes' now when Ah look out. Ah swears Ah'm a-tellin' yo' de truf, Mast' Ahthuh, fo' de Lo'd Ah am."

With an incredulous scowl for wide-eyed

George, the master strode to the door, stepped outside. There in the moonlight, beside the grave of his mother, stood a man, a tall thin figure loosely held together. His hair was white; his head was bowed upon his breast, as if in prayer. At Pentland's step he looked up, showing a face benign but flabby, a nose extremely long, the lips full and limply open. It was Mr. Crawford.

II

Pentland glared at the old man with sullen eyes; Mr. Crawford returned his gaze meekly, saying at length,

"I am intruding again, you see."

Silence.

"I shan't offer excuses," went on the stranger. "I had to come back because my heart lies buried here. I loved your mother."

This was said with so much gentleness, so much humility and earnestness, that anger faded out of Pentland's face. With an impulsive step forward, he seized the hand of the older man, gazing upon him in trembling silence.

"Do I need to assure you of my sympathy?"

asked Mr. Crawford. "You have it. In such extremities words are weak, yet we resort to them. Perhaps it is well that we do, for vain though they be, they serve in some measure to ease our aching hearts."

A groan for answer.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

"Comforted!" exclaimed Pentland. "Do not mock me. For me there is no comfort."

"But surely our Heavenly Father—"

"Enough! Our Heavenly Father, as you call Him, has given me the most grievous wound that could possibly have come to me. You spoke to me of God's will at the funeral, but I ask you, sir, was it God's will that my mother be taken from me without an instant's warning? Was it God's will that those cruel horses strike her down, mangling her body beyond recognition? Well, if such be the will of God, I proclaim Him a monster!"

Mr. Crawford was surprised, pained,

"Your language is extreme."

"If you shared my grief you would not think so."

"I do share it."

"Bah!"

The old man's face tightened,

"I loved your mother since childhood, believe me. She cared for me, but not as much as she did for your father. She married him. I tried to prove a true friend to both of them. He was killed in the War, and she moved to this place. Years went by. We corresponded regularly. As I have explained before, she at last consented to marry me. I set out for Pittsburgh. She was struck down by the very coach in which I was hurrying to her side. She died without opening her eyes upon me. What a melancholy disaster, and yet—"

"And yet?" mockingly.

"And yet we have no right to set ourselves up as judges. We mortals are weak in understanding."

"Ha!"

"God works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."

"Your words have sound, but no meaning," snarled Pentland. "My woe is beyond the reach of theological platitude. Religion holds no promise for me, none whatsoever."

"But surely you believe in God?"

"As a child I did, but experience destroyed my faith. I grew older. I began to think for myself. The anthropomorphic ideal became a self-evident absurdity, and God a being as mythical as Santa Claus."

"Oh!"

"I turned from Him to things which I could understand—grasp—to realities—most of all to my mother. She became my deity. I worshipped her."

"But—"

"Just a moment. Let me have my say. My pent-up heart must purge itself of its woeful burden, just as my understanding has already purged itself of the illusion of religion. For religion is a snare, a myth, a lie, a base phantom in which there is guile but no solid use. There is no God, and I for one will no longer pretend that there is! Shadow, invention, a cruel and mocking jest, there's your God! Reality is what I crave, but that fled when she died. Yes, all reality has vanished from my life, save that of Fear."

The cool calm moon looked softly down upon the two men there beside the grave, as Pentland went on with a tremulous voice,

"Fear! Fear, my unseen twin as far back as I can remember. All through infancy and childhood it tortured me, choking me, stifling me until existence itself was a horror, coloring my entire life awake or asleep, absorbing my attention as a sore spot in the body makes us forget everything else, destroying in me all sense of well-being, distorting every single thing that my mind fixed upon. Fear and always fear, forever apprehension and timidity, vague disquietude. I cringed from it all, shrank back! fled to my mother for comfort and assurance—unfortunately she herself was obsessed by fear."

"I can't believe it," protested Mr. Crawford. "You do her wrong."

Sneering Pentland,

"I do her justice. You never knew her as I knew her,—you couldn't. Even when I was a baby in her arms I felt instinctively that her very bones were carious from a besetting dread which she could not conceal. As I grew up I saw it plainer upon her,—and yet I played a game with her, and she with me. The two of us were a trembling pair gripped tight by Fear, a horrid ulcer common to both of us, and

when we crushed it back it seeped down into our blood and poisoned us. It ought to have been allowed to burst forth to purify itself by sunlight, but we made the mistake of pretending that Life casts no shadow, avoiding talk of unpleasant things, ignoring, as best we could, the Thing that leered upon us. I thought I had outgrown it, but when she died there flashed upon me, like a thunderbolt out of Heaven, the Great Clarification!"

Mr. Crawford broke in eagerly,

"The Great Clarification? What do you mean?"

"I mean the perception that all fear is at bottom a fear of death! As I stood beside the open grave, here where she was lowered into the earth, I saw my old familiar enemy at last in his true form. I realized, then, that all phobias are of the things which shackle man toward the abatement of his life. Childhood fear of the unknown! boyish terror of disease! uneasy looking about for the devil at nightfall! bad dreams! suspicion of paralysis! yellow fever! these and a thousand other terrors were shown to have been decoys, lures sent to keep my eye in the wrong direction,

so that the great and inevitable all-consuming and devouring horror might advance unseen. Death is the end!"

"No!" cried the old man, "death is not the end!"

"Death is the end, the fate of all," continued Pentland, numbly beating his breast, "and there is no escape! We may prevent accident, we may guard against sickness and even circumvent it, but back of and beyond these vincible woes rises the inevitability of death in some form. All that lives must die: bird, beast, and man. Creatures run here and there, destinies diverge and fan out broadly, yet in the end all living things meet upon the grave, they all converge to that one single destination. All must come to it, wise men and fools, ladies of rank and harlots—"

"But Christ—"

"—conquerors, saints, and knaves. All of them face it, all bewail it—why! the literature of every people on earth rings with lamentation over the necessity of death! I try to ignore it, but everywhere that I look I see life sickening to decay, and when I read, the printed page has only one phrase: death the

end, the fate of all. The Scriptures reek with it; so do the classics, Seneca, Euripides, Tacitus. When I open more modern books, it's just the same: Dante harps and harps on it, and so does gloomy old Milton. I try Hamlet and meet the ghost, if Macbeth it's murder, if Lear an aging monarch tottering to his rendezvous with *me!*"

Mr. Crawford had been gazing at him with pitying eye, and now he seized the opportunity to announce in a fatherly tone,

"Some degree of fear is common to all of us, although it usually vanishes with youth. In your case it seems to have persisted for an unduly long period, but no doubt it will gradually blunt itself and disappear in time."

"Disappear in time!" rejoined Pentland angrily. "Are you trying to be facetious? Time! why it is time that lies at the very root of this damnable evil. *Fugit irreparabile tempus,* that's just it! When Mother was alive, the years went by without my noticing them,—all at once she's gone, and I find myself stripped of youth, pushed to the verge of middle life, with only a fragment of time reserved for me,—beyond that looms death."

His eyes fell upon the sundial at the foot of the grave,

"The sundial never stops. While you watch it, the shadows go on marching; when you ignore it, they go on just the same, just the same, pushing you toward the abysm,—the very sight of it is maddening! I hate it! O God, how I hate it!"

Even as he spoke he caught up a heavy stone and rushed to the sundial, striking blow after blow, until the brass blade had been beaten from its stone pedestal, and lay upon the ground.

"What folly!" cried Pentland then, reeling on his shaking legs. "I'm losing my senses! If there were a God—"

"There *is* a God," Mr. Crawford broke in sternly, "an all-wise, loving Father who stands beyond our censure and our understanding, a mighty Creator who has formed the universe in accordance with His own divine plan."

Pentland with a snarl,

"The universe! Bah! it has no plan, and if it has an author, it reflects small honor upon him. Lacking rhyme and reason, full of wasteful cruel conflict, it is a medley of all

that is blind, stupid, banal, and disgusting. Such is the universe, old man, a silly product for which I will not revere your so-called Creator. But enough of this," he moaned, suddenly weak and sick. "I have no power to follow abstract analysis. I have no interest in intellectual vagaries. Your tales of Santa Claus and God, what good do they do me when fear of death is curdling my heart? I long for my blessed mother and she is gone. My blessed blessed mother, would that the present were only a nightmare, from which I might awake. Oh that I might see her at my side again! Oh that I might touch her hand! Oh that I might even as much as hear her voice!"

"Sir!" cried Mr. Crawford, drawing his long thin figure slowly erect, "you *shall* hear her voice!"

III

Pentland jerked up his head to stare,

"I beg your pardon?"

"Please let me explain," said Mr. Crawford.

"Do so."

The old man bowed gravely, and in his florid manner said,

"Sir, there lives, in the city of Philadelphia —which is the acknowledged center of medicine and the experimental sciences on this side of the Atlantic—a recent arrival from the laboratories of Europe, by name Mr. Richard Bacon. Personally I am only slightly acquainted with this gentleman, but through accredited hearsay I am quite familiar with his talents. I feel justified in agreeing with his many admirers that he is to-day the most illustrious representative of science in America. After having studied with Lavoisier in France and Sir Humphrey Davy in London, Mr. Bacon was for some time under the tutelage of the celebrated Joseph Black of Scotland. In due course he came to this country and located in Philadelphia for the purpose of working with the late Benjamin Rush. It was Richard Bacon who discovered the oxy-hydrogen flame. He was also the first person to produce good artificial graphite from charcoal. Besides giving promise of perfecting new means of illuminating our public buildings, he—"

Seeing that Pentland was on the point of interrupting, Mr. Crawford held up his hand for silence, and went on hurriedly,

"I have mentioned all this merely to produce in your mind the respect due the powers of this most extraordinary individual, but since you are impatient, I shall come to the point at once. Richard Bacon has invented an instrument which he calls the spiritscope. This instrument is calculated to bring the living of this world into communication with the inhabitants of the land beyond the grave."

Pentland drew back in mute astonishment; his companion went on solemnly,

"I am an old man. I have tried to live as a Christian ought to live. I joined the church when I was thirteen, and since that time of holy union I have submitted myself to God's will. I would not dare to try to interfere with the plans of my Father in Heaven. But I am human. Since your mother's death this world has become a doleful place to me. As I drag myself from one day to another the only thing that bears me up is the hope of meeting her in Paradise. I came to this sacred spot troubled in spirit, to pray to Almighty God, seeking to

know His will. I believe my prayer has been answered. I feel sure that Our Father has guided Richard Bacon to America for the purpose of perfecting the spiritscope. I am convinced that this is God's means of comforting us. While biding our own time we are to use this instrument to plan that reunion with our loved ones which is to endure through all Eternity!"

Arthur Pentland was staring into the night, rigid, silent, white.

The old man stepped closer to him,

"Arthur—please let me call you that—Arthur, he has been experimenting with the spiritscope for several days now. By next Thursday he will have completed his trials. He has invited me to come to his laboratory Thursday evening, to hear the result. I am going to start for Philadelphia in the morning. My boy, come with me! Come with me and hear the voice of your dear mother speaking to us out of that happy land to which the Lord of Hosts has taken her, and where she is awaiting us! Come, Arthur! It is in fulfillment of God's plan that you come with me!"

"God's plan," muttered Pentland, as in a dream. "There is no God,—how then can there be a plan? And yet I must go, for the time has come. The time has come at last, and I . . . . . I am ready."

IV

They set out.

It was a dull somber louring day, a gloomy day that fitted in with Arthur Pentland's mood, as hour after hour he slouched in a corner of the stagecoach, at Mr. Crawford's side. Most of the opposite seat was taken up by a burly one who mourned because there were no lady passengers; he had a way with them—so he said—but Pentland never heard. He only stared out of the window, gaping to see the horses hurtle round a curve with frothy mouths and bellies mud-splashed. With steaming sides the beasts slowed down, panting as they walked up a steep and slippery hill, and then, the summit reached, they broke into a gallop, racing down the slope and over a level stretch to a wayside tavern—the driver jerked them on their haunches and wanted to know where'n Hell them fresh ones was.

A bit of turmoil followed: a fresh team trotted out, men rushed to the bar for what they'd been waiting for, lips played with cuss words and gusty fun,—all at once there was a shout of Philadelphia! All in fer Philadelphia! More scrambling then. Hey wait! Come on! Move over, you! The driver leaned down from his high seat to spit tobacco juice at the stable-boy, cracked his whip, and gave the trembling horses such a cut they danged near snapped the traces. Philadelphia!

The new passengers were full of talk, but Pentland was indifferent to them. He never moved, save when the dashing coach struck a bog-hole and threw him into some stranger's embrace. There was a wide and windy panorama unfolding all about him, but he never saw it, nor did he notice the wenches giggling waving squealing beside the turnpike, the turnpike on which he was moving east, east! east! steadily east, past an endless procession of immigrants moving west, west! west! new life pushing into the young west,—and Pentland east.

Mr. Crawford was trying to cheer his friend

with a steady flow of talk. The old man explained the by-laws of his church, the minister's salary, the rewards for faith, the immense satisfaction of knowing that one is saved, the lesson of Job, the significance of Abraham and Elisha, the courage of Luke, John, Matthew, Daniel, Esther, Joseph and Moses. He spoke of the glories of Heaven, also, but seeing that Pentland was for some reason uninterested in all this, he returned to earth. The present season, he declared, was set off by itself, being neither winter nor spring,—how curious. Yes, it was a kind of interlude in the pageantry of Nature; a sort of dark cloud April was, but it certainly had a silver lining, or anyhow it soon would have.

"Just look!" he cried, and tapped at the window. "The weather is improving every day! The hills are still naked, of course, but Nature's pulse is quickening. The chilling frosts of winter are working up out of the ground, it's quite apparent, don't you think so? Yes, yes, the terrors of the North Wind are exhausted at last. It is retiring in favor of the milder breezes, the gentle zephyrs one might call them. Ah! from now on we shall

see the wind caress the earth, not buffet it, wooing bud and root, and whispering of the bloom and wondrous flowering to come."

Pentland made no answer to this poetical flight, but silence did not discourage his companion: the old gentleman kept on with the entertainment, content if now and again he got a curt nod or an inarticulate grunt in reply, and when after a nightmare of plunging through mud and mire, the last day of their journey dawned, he redoubled his efforts to give Arthur Pentland some of his own high spirits. The coach dipped through a wood, swung round a hill, and Mr. Crawford gave a cry, pointed,

"Look! There are the spires of the city, Philadelphia! We'll soon be there."

Pentland did not show the slightest interest; he continued to languish in his seat, coat collar turned up against his ears, his head sunk upon his breast. Swiftly swiftly the horses dashed on, leaping under the lash of the impatient driver. The sun sank lower and lower, until the creaking straining coach threw before itself a long and writhing shadow, a monstrous precursor of their coming,—then

with a rush and rumble and a blare of horns they darted through the outskirts of the city, slowed up to round a corner, and halted before a tavern.

The travellers got out.

"I suggest that we go to the laboratory at once," said Mr. Crawford eagerly.

"I am ready," murmured Pentland in a heavy voice.

Good.

They set out.

By this time the sun had set, and a chill twilight was spreading abroad. Pentland shivered as he looked about: on either hand were rows of houses, wrapped in shadow, save that an occasional kitchen window was a-gleam with the fire on the hearth inside, there where meats were turning on their spits. Tramp tramp tramp in silence, until Mr. Crawford caught sight of a lamplighter far off, making the rounds of the city with his lantern, leaving behind, at every corner he passed, a cheery little flame to check the oncoming gloom.

"It is a good omen," smiled the old man. "Dusk has been gathering, but is now dispelled, just as the shadow on our hearts is

to be dissipated by the Light which shines out from Eternity."

Suddenly a man brushed past them and hurried on along the street. The stranger was enveloped in a long black cloak which concealed his outlines, but when he reached the next corner he paused to look back, and as he did so he showed himself in the light of the lamp above his head.

"Why!" exclaimed Mr. Crawford, as the fellow whirled about and disappeared in the darkness, "that is Richard Bacon himself! Let's hurry. Perhaps we can overtake him before he reaches his lodgings."

He turned to Pentland with an eager smile, —and started back in surprise, crying,

"Arthur! What has happened? Are you ill?"

Pentland raised a hand to his temple, and for a moment seemed to be on the point of swooning, but recovered himself. He straightened up, muttered,

"I am ready. I am ready, I say."

They went on.

A few moments brought them across Independence Square and to the lodgings of

Richard Bacon, the illustrious scientist. The windows were dark.

"He's not in," said Pentland, in a voice resembling a moan. "Let's go 'way."

"No. His laboratory is in the rear of the house, where, as he says, he is less likely to be disturbed by passers-by. He expects me. I'm positive he's in."

So saying, he raised the knocker and gave it a blow.

They were admitted by a negress.

With a lighted candle in her hand she led them along a dark passageway and down a flight of rickety steps, and after that along another and a darker hall, halting, at length, before a heavy door of oak, bound with iron and studded with large nails. She tapped lightly. A strangely clear and vibrant voice wanted to know who was there.

"Mr. Crawford and a friend."

Silence.

The black woman went away.

The callers heard a bolt shoot back. The door swung open, and the characteristic odors of a laboratory seeped out upon them. They stepped in.

V

Stepped in, to find themselves in an apartment of large and uncertain dimensions, the ceiling so low as hardly to accommodate tall Mr. Crawford. As for Arthur Pentland, the light afforded by the half dozen candles scattered about the place must have been too dim for him to see by, for in following his friend into the place he stumbled over first one thing and then another, and once he came near tripping over a crate of rabbits. The floor, however, was a litter: a mess of boxes, tables, and miscellaneous utensils, including a motley array of test tubes, phials, crucibles, and gallipots. In one corner an enormous alembic was going about its business of distillation, while upon the shelves around the walls were bottles of herbs and nameless drugs.

Yet that which even more forcibly attracted the gaze of the two friends was the man who stood in the center of the laboratory, an intense and sultry dark-haired figure seemingly conjured out of the gloom back of and beyond him. In stature he was short, in build extremely slender. The arms were of unusual length, the hands graceful and strong. He

stood erect, save that the left shoulder was twisted forward,—perhaps it had once been broken, by a fall, or by a blow. As for the face, it was lean and brown like burnished copper; the eyes black and apparently without pupil; the lips firm and haughty. His jaw stuck out with an expression of elusive pugnacity, but the brow was calm, lofty, noble.

Mr. Crawford saluted this individual with a deep bow,

"Mr. Bacon, let me present a young friend of mine, Mr. Arthur Pentland."

The scientist replied in a voice in which there was a hint of derision,

"Arthur Pentland of Pittsburgh."

A curt nod was Pentland's only response. He took the chair which Bacon brought forward, and sat down. Mr. Crawford, on the contrary, drew himself up straight, his eyes upon the scientist,

"Sir, have you completed your trials?"

Bacon made a theatrical bow,

"I have."

Mr. Crawford turned his eager gaze to where the spiritscope stood upon a table. He went on in a quavering voice,

"And are you satisfied as to the result?"

"I am."

"So that upon your word of honor as a gentleman, and upon your reputation as a scholar, there is no longer any doubt?"

"No longer any doubt."

"Then in the name of the merciful God tell me, is the experiment a success?"

With a smile the scientist turned to a cupboard and took out a bottle of wine. He slowly poured each of his guests a glass of liquor,

"It is a success."

Mr. Crawford gave a cry of triumph and seized his wineglass. Lifting it high he cried out fervently,

"The blessings of humanity upon you, sir, for this wonderful invention! Let us drink to your genius, which now enables mankind to communicate with the so-called dead!"

He was bringing the glass to his lips when Bacon's voice fell upon his ears with the force of a blow,

"Communicate with the dead? You have misunderstood me!"

Mr. Crawford lowered his wineglass with a

trembling hand. He stared, sank into a chair, confused and full of stammer,

"What do you mean? Didn't you say the experiment was a success? Didn't you say that communication with the other world had been established?"

Bacon fastened his dark inscrutable eyes upon the old man, and when he answered his voice was as a flame leaping up from smouldering coals,

"I said the experiment was a success, and so it is, a complete and unquestionable success, but by that I mean disproof of the possibility of communicating with the dead. This instrument," he continued, waving his long and sinuous fingers over the spiritscope, "is based upon the scientific principle that all life, even in its lowest forms, is energy. By methods which you would not understand even if I were to explain them to you, I have constructed this machine in such manner as to remain indifferent to the exertion of force by earthly bodies, and at the same time to intercept the slightest conceivable degree of energy which could be put forth by beings in another world. Were there such a world, this

instrument would receive the delicate and peculiar impressions characteristic of it, and by means of this valvular arrangement these impressions would be magnified to such a degree as to be perceptible to human sense. I have given the spiritscope a thorough test, and the results are uniformly negative, from which the conclusion is inescapable that there is no such thing as an after-world, and that the dead do not live beyond the grave."

VI

While the scientist was relieving himself of all this, Arthur Pentland listened calmly, apparently no more concerned than if he had been hearing a bit of casual news. Not so Mr. Crawford: he fell back in his chair, dismayed, swept off his feet. The glass he had lately held aloft tipped out of his shaking hand, letting the wine spill on the table and drip to the floor in ruddy drops, seemingly the blood from his very veins, for his face was gray like death. His flabby old lips quivered more and more violently, and when Bacon had finished, he faltered out,

"There must be some mistake."

"I do not make mistakes."

"Man possesses a soul."

"Man possesses no soul," said Bacon. "Science dispenses with the notion, just as grownups dispense with the myth of Santa Claus."

Here Arthur Pentland tightened his lips.

"Scoffer!" cried Mr. Crawford. "When God created man in His own image and likeness, He placed within the human breast that supreme glory the soul, thereby setting us off from the beasts of the field, and supplying us with an undying intelligence to live beyond the transient hour of the earthly body, which in our mundane existence is suffered to be its shell!"

This sentence having exhausted his breath he paused; Bacon replied suavely,

"What you say is interesting; it is a pity it is not true. But intelligence does not survive the body, either in man or in those lower animals from which you fallaciously assume him to be set off. It is difficult, or rather it is impossible, to conceive of intelligence apart from organization. Man lays claims to intelligence, and often he actually does exhibit

some small degree of wit, but this is strictly dependent upon bodily states. Not only consciousness but every other stirring of mental life depends upon functions which go out like a flame when nourishment is cut off. The phenomena of intelligence correspond, element for element, to the operations of special parts of the brain. This fundamental proposition carries with it the denial of immortality. When the body dies, that which you are pleased to call the soul also perishes."

"But the Scriptures!"

"Ah! the Scriptures," rejoined Bacon. "The Scriptures! the Scriptures!"

He broke into sardonic laughter.

"Yes, the Scriptures," pursued Mr. Crawford sternly. "The Holy Word of God! What argument can your atheism offer against Christianity and its divine assurances of eternal life?"

The scientist put on the manner of an adult who is condescending to explain a situation to a child.

"The Christian evidence for immortality," said he, "roots far back in human history, beginning with animism and related savage

beliefs, building up from that low stage, becoming complex and ramifying out into many directions, but even so recently as the days of the Israelites it was little more than unsupported speculation."

"Wait!"

"The Old Testament attached no ethical significance to life after death, and had nothing to say concerning personal immortality. As to Jesus, there is, amid all the fragments of his ambiguous and figurative teaching, not one authenticated and specific statement to support the idea of immortality. Rather than emanating from a divine source, the Christian doctrine of immortality is the fabrication of human commentators and all too human translators: it became a part of Christianity only several centuries after the foundation of that religion."

"I deny that!" cried Mr. Crawford passionately.

"You deny it! And who are you to bandy words with me? What do you know of the eschatology of the Christian faith? I tell you that your notion of immortality is a human invention, a subterfuge, adopted for the pur-

pose of winning converts. Young little Christianity! it would never have survived if it hadn't held out to all comers the promise of a future life!"

Mr. Crawford half rose from his chair. . . . . Slowly he sank back again. . . . . His voice was unexpectedly calm,

"I am trying to control myself. This is a matter of the greatest importance to me. I admit that I am unskilled in the technicalities of eschatology. I am unable to refute your statements, but what you say seems to me plainly false. The doctrine of immortality of human rather than of divine origin? A mortal fabrication? An invention? How is it, then, that the belief in eternal life is found in all ages, in all countries, and among all manner of people, whether cultivated or barbarous? Why the universality of this invention, as you name it?"

"I can answer your question in a very few words," replied Bacon easily. "The doctrine of immortality has been invented—in part unconsciously, in part by clear intent—for the reason that the prospect of death is too shocking for the mind of man to bear. Death!

voilà the king of horrors, the terror infallible, inescapable and paralyzing, gruesome beyond description, the antagonist who is unseen yet is ever present, oppressive and implacable foe who turns the sundial into an instrument of torture, who—"

"Ha ha ha ha ha!" came suddenly from Pentland.

"—forces puny man to avert his gaze while he spins the mythy veil of sweet eternal life, a cloak to hide from view what is undeniably his one and only destination,—the grave."

"That is not true!" protested Mr. Crawford hotly. "Not the grave, but Heaven is mankind's destination, if only we follow Christ. The voice of Truth tells me that, and furthermore—"

"Illusion tells you that," sneered the scientist. "Illusion clever and full of comfort, no doubt, no doubt, illusion packed tight with verisimilitude, very true, but illusion for all of that. O man! not by Truth but by decoy and deceit and falseness do you guide your life. Very well, eschew the fact and take refuge in evasion, for now I name your central weakness: feeling and perception in

advance of the power to seize and attain, yes! and more: feeling and perception beyond the capacity even to contemplate with calm."

He transfixed Mr. Crawford with his black hard eye, and dropped his voice to a scarcely audible murmur,

"Death the end, the fate of all! Be frank with yourself, and you will have to admit that in the hope of immortality you are only breeding up an illusion. As for your young friend here—ah! Mr. Arthur Pentland's face is changing. It is a face that artists might call strong, but see it shake! There is a lurking horror in his eyes, his cloudy troubled eyes, —how curious. He struggles to keep back what he can't keep back, aha! he knows, even if you do not, that the source and single source of the notion of eternal life is Fear!"

"Just a moment!" put in Mr. Crawford. "What about Martin Luther? There was a man without fear. He hurled inkpots at the very Devil. And he accepted the doctrine of immortality!"

"You are poorly read. Luther Honest scorned the idea as part and parcel of the froth of Rome. It was Luther Expedient who be-

came reconciled to it,—as a matter of expediency. He had to make his little Reformation a success."

Mr. Crawford was contemptuous,

"And I suppose it is because of religious expediency that so many atheistic philosophers have accepted immortality!"

"Expediency is but a glove," retorted Bacon, "put to grip by many different hidden hands, of which religion is only one. The philosopher Kant will illustrate my point. He took up and wore this glove I've called expediency. Believing that without hope of being able to become perfect, man could not strive for moral perfection with all his might, Kant made the notion of immortality an indispensable postulate of the practical reason, though, as he told me himself, he was heartily ashamed of such a pretense. O Immanuel! Immanuel!"

"And he did rightly," maintained Mr. Crawford, "for there is in man an unerring instinct—"

"To evade the truth when it attacks our vanity and our peace of mind. The lady you loved has gone to dust."

"Blasphemer!" cried Mr. Crawford in a terrible voice. "She lives, and in a land of such Ineffable Glory as to make this world the very seat of pain and woe."

"Ha ha ha ha ha! Then why! oh why do you linger here? You prate of Heaven, but I'll wager that you keep out of draughts! Oh these who rave of swooning bliss up yonder, how they cling to life here on earth! Secret mind knows the truth, but tongue fibs. Were it otherwise, why such as you, bereaved one, would gladly depart this hideous life and scramble up to where the adorable soul has gone before,—passed on, one says with gentle smiles and eyes cast upward!"

He paused, for Mr. Crawford had risen to his feet with an air of finality, his face white as marble, his voice broken and hoarse,

"Mr. Bacon, the discussion is at an end. Further words would avail nothing. Your arguments are of doubtful validity, your generalizations too sweeping, your mockeries intolerable. I believe in the authority of the inspired Word of God, and hence in immortality. I would believe in it were you to marshal ten thousand times the glib arguments

with which you have buttressed your heresies."

He drew a pistol from his pocket.

"Do not be alarmed," he went on. "I am about to take my own life, not yours. I have prepared for this contingency. I still believe that the spiritscope is capable of being manipulated by beings in the other world. But after what you have said this evening, I am convinced that your atheistic prejudices have caused you, unwittingly perhaps, to give the machine an imperfect trial. I propose to demonstrate the existence of life beyond the grave. Have I your word of honor that this instrument is ready for use?"

"You have," said Bacon calmly. "The arrangement of dial and sensitized paper which you have already examined will register your most attenuated signal, should you be kind enough to let us know what Heaven is like."

Mr. Crawford gripped the pistol till his knuckles showed white,

"One word more. Up until to-night your attitude toward me was most friendly; this evening you have been frankly hostile. May

I ask the reason for this hatred? To my knowledge I have never injured you in any way."

"You are nothing to me personally," answered the scientist, in a cutting voice. "Hatred! I do not hate you, but I *do* loathe that for which you stand, theology! To me you are a symbol of tradition, of reason in abeyance and moral platitude held high, of hackneyed faith and outgrown creed, a symbol of that vain silly religion which is a skin ready to be shed, and yet clings on, clogging the march toward Truth. I have worsted you in argument, and now there stands my spirit-scope, ready to demolish your last claims,—but perhaps you have forgotten to load your pistol?"

Mr. Crawford bowed coldly,

"I accept your challenge. I count myself fortunate to have this opportunity to oppose the dogma of the arrogant and godless science which you represent. May the Lord use this machine to judge between us."

He turned to Pentland,

"Good-bye, Arthur, until we meet in a happier world, in that Land of Glory where

there shall be no more tears, neither sorrow nor suffering. Be faithful and you will receive the crown of Love that fadeth not away. I will signal to you by means of the spiritscope, and as I promised, you shall also have a message from your dear mother. Good-bye, and may the blessing of Our Lord Jesus Christ rest upon you forever and ever."

He fixed his eyes upon the spiritscope, raised the pistol to his temple, and pressed the trigger.

VII

A thunder of sound shook the room—sudden smoke puffed out, a stinking cloud through which Mr. Crawford clawed at the table, and slid gently to the floor.

For one long shuddering moment Arthur Pentland kept his straining eyes upon the body, then throwing back his head he burst into hysterical laughter, wild paroxysms which crowded at the words he gasped out,

"Save him! Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! Save him!"

The scientist drew a snuffbox from the cuff of his sleeve, murmuring gravely,

"Impossible."

"Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!"

Bacon was observing the dying man with curiosity.

"Death," said he, "is always an interesting phenomenon, and because of his greater complexity of structure, this is particularly true of the animal we call man. However—"

"Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!"

"—it is an error to distinguish death in man from death in other creatures, for if you are remarking the illustration which Mr. Crawford is affording us, you must admit that human beings perish much as do the beasts of the field. The great—"

"Hee hee hee hee! Hee hee! Hee!"

"—majority of people die as animals die, without giving a sign one way or the other, a hint, I may say, of their return to the level of inanimate matter. Ah, I greatly fear it is—"

"Hee hee!"

"—only the transitory effluvium of an egotistical brain which gives man his moment's illusion of a higher destiny."

Laughter had gone away from Arthur Pent-

land, leaving him weak and faint, a quivering thing that stared and stared at the quivering thing upon the floor.

"Save him," he moaned.

"He is dead," said Bacon.

Saying this, he flung a sheet over the body and sat down at the table, continuing with a wry smile,

"My dear sir, why regard so fixedly the earthly shell he has left behind? Observe, instead, I beg you, the spiritscope on the table here between us. By means of this machine, he'll shortly tell us, no doubt, no doubt, just how he arrived upon the Delectable Mountain, and how the angels furnished him with harp and wings and fig leaf, and gauze trousers, too, for modesty is a Christian virtue! Bah!" he cried, with sudden spleen, "the dial you are watching is—"

"Wait!" muttered Pentland hoarsely, "wait!"

"Ah yes," smiled the scientist, taking another pinch of snuff. "Let us wait. By all means, yes. We must have faith, else fadeless Love will never never come down upon us."

With curling lips he leaned back in his chair, while Pentland riveted his eyes upon the dial of the spiritscope. In this manner a half hour passed, the scientist now and then inquiring, with unveiled sarcasm, if the machine had registered, and Pentland replying, in a low and halting voice, that it had not.

"Come," cried Bacon at length, "this is a sleeveless task, I assure you."

"Wait!"

"And for what? I tell you that by that one pistol shot, by that one piece of lead projected at high velocity against his temporal bone, he destroyed—so far as he is concerned—the entire universe, exchanging reality for nothingness. *Certa amittimus, dum incerta petimus,* as old Plautus would put it."

"Mr. Crawford died to realize an ideal," muttered Pentland, struggling to keep his teeth from chattering.

"But did not realize it. *Entre nous,* the fellow was a dolt not to know that it is only by living that man can realize his ideals. Once a sentient organism, he is now nothing but meat. His body is cooling. Presently livid spots will appear upon the skin. The car-

cass will emit odorous gases as invitation to a horde of insects—"

"In mercy's name, stop!" cried Pentland. "I can't bear it."

Even as he spoke he sprang to his feet and rushed from the room,—and halted in confusion, for the door through which he had just fled was not the door through which he had entered the laboratory in company with Mr. Crawford. The apartment in which he now found himself was dark, save for a brazier of coals which gave out a red light strongly resembling an eye gleaming from the night. What appeared to be a pair of brass scales scintillated in the light thus afforded, but beyond this he could distinguish nothing.

"This is my private laboratory," said Bacon, entering with a candle. "I do my preliminary work in the chamber you have already seen, and perform my more vital experiments here. May I observe that you were free to go into the street? You came into this room of your own accord. But to continue, the corpse—"

"Be still!" cried Pentland, stumbling into a chair. "Are you a monster that you torture

me in this fashion? The corpse! Great God, I shall be with it soon enough."

"Are you thinking of following your friend's example?" inquired the scientist, as he lit another candle.

"Hush . . . . . hush."

"Or have you a fatal malady?"

"None," groaned Pentland, burying his face in his hands, "none, except the greatest of all maladies, terror of that decay which is momently pushing me nearer and nearer the grave."

A smile from Bacon,

"Your rhetoric is excellent, but your knowledge of somatic states is sadly deficient. Provided that the organs remain sound and health is safeguarded, science knows of no reason why the body should ever decay or wear out. It is a self-renewing machine. Old age is not inevitable."

"What!"

"*Senectus ipsa est morbus.* In plain speech, old age is a disease."

"Aye, but a disease no mortal physician can heal!"

"Old age is a dagger, science is a long

sword. But have another glass of that brandy. It will clarify your thought."

Pentland pushed back the decanter angrily,

"See here, it is sorry sport to mock at one who is already prostrated. Fear has clutched me since I came into this damnable world! Now you cross my path with talk of what your science is and what it can do! You boast of skill and erudition, but let me say this, if there's anything to you besides chatter and brag, study out a way to circumvent old age and death. Yes, there's a problem for you! Effect a charm against the Fleshless One!"

"That," said Bacon, slowly and clearly, "that, sir, is precisely what I have done!"

Pentland stared

VIII

and stared.

"I am a man of parts," continued Richard Bacon, Esquire, and struck an attitude. "Such mechanical arrangements as the spiritscope exhaust neither my interests nor my capabilities. Not physics alone, nor chemistry of itself, but rather the entire range of science, —behold my proper field."

Pentland's mouth had been open for some little time, but not a word came out of it.

"The possibilities of science are endless," declared the learned man. "Observe the vessel upon your right hand. It contains living beings brought into existence by me."

Pentland recoiled.

"It contains sea urchins," was the contemptuous explanation. "No doubt you thought it contained human young. The latter can be created by every lout who can find a wall to back his slut against; the creation of sea urchins is much more difficult, I assure you. And yet I have done it. Having secured a number of unfertilized eggs I treated them, not with spermatozoa, but with a solution of butyric acid, whereupon they developed into larvæ."

"I am not interested in this sort of thing," interrupted Pentland.

In that instant Richard Bacon flashed into a madman: his features twisted to a snarl—he showed his teeth—his eyes gleamed with venom,—then as if a mask had come back upon him, his face was suddenly quiet, cold, stolid.

"Quite true," he muttered thickly. "Quite true that you're not interested in creating life. You care nothing for the generation of that which may go out from you, your sole concern being that which may come in to you, to preserve your own dear precious flame. Very apparently so! Well, if such be your humour, let us turn to the perpetuation of life."

Opening an ice-chest, he took out a small glass vessel in which a bit of flesh was suspended in liquid. This he held up,

"Do you observe that the flesh vibrates, contracts, expands, pulses?"

"Yes," whispered Pentland. "It vibrates, contracts, expands, pulses . . . . . like a heart!"

"That is precisely what it is,—the heart of a chicken which for many months I have kept alive by scientific immersion in a plasma of blood serum. In cold storage it will live indefinitely. You perceive, thus, that unending life upon the earth is possible even for the chicken-hearted!"

"But—"

"Ah!" exclaimed Bacon, carefully replacing the vessel in its icy retreat, "permit me to

anticipate you. You are about to protest that there is a far-flung gulf between a chicken and a human being. Physiologically, yes. True, also, that the greater problem lies in the perpetuation of life in so complex an organism as man. According to the theory of—but why should I deliver a lecture on matters beyond your understanding? Nutrition! metabolism! catalysis! what are these to you? Words, nothing more."

He fell to muttering intelligibly, pacing to and fro on noiseless feet, his fingers in his hair—jerked round to face Pentland—hurried on in a confidential tone,

"In Holland there's a certain name-him-not who dreams and speculates . . . . . oh yes! the secret of life is in the glands—they make up and let loose into the blood what may be called liquid chemicals to invigorate the organs. Chut to all who call him great! I call him a fool, a blind man home from seeing the elephant, a visitor returning to his hovel with but a portion of the larger grander whole which is the truth. What he's got is only a lame halt and crippled one-eyed notion, yet he hawks it about for All, for like mankind in

general, his mind's too small to grasp the vaster stretch from Alpha to Omega! Not science but a plot of ground is what he is meant to fertilize."

He stepped back for an ornate flourish toward a chart of the human body on the wall,

"The glands, I say, control and motivate no more than fragments of that illusive and majestic whole which, since it is in itself the all-pervasive government, I call the basic principle. The life of the organism is a correlated sequence of phenomena, and it's the correlation that is important, and not subsidiary and isolated facts. In every detail's structure there is made manifest the urge of the organism regarded as a unit,—yet till I, Richard Bacon, came upon the scene, there was no tracing the links connecting, ramifying out from even one of these details. See in me the pathfinder! 'plough in a ploughed yet unploughed field! I with my deft hand felt down through the maze of all these complex phenomena to where a pulse was throbbing, at first without meaning, but later showing clear as light just how response emerges and flows reciprocally between the unit and the whole,

and thus builds and builds toward the harmonious result. All this is my discovery, brought to precipitation by sweat and midnight pondering in the test tube of my brain, enabling me to see the forest and the single trees all in proportion. I've solved the riddle of the universe!"

With a leer for Pentland he seized a glass of brandy and lifted it on high, crying,

"A toast! A toast to Richard Bacon, most illustrious of men, for through my wondrous science I have grasped the secret of perpetual life! Impelled by inordinate egotism and vanity, spurred on by fear of death, oho! prodded by curiosity and imagination, mankind has sought this golden key since earliest time! Philosophers, psst! priests, kings, scholars and poets! mongrel dabsters and mumbling seers! all these and many more have grappled with the problem, spewing forth as their joint product such a mess of potions, powders, and elixirs, and such a mad array of spells and charms and incantations as Hell itself does not contain! Tscheeeeee! All this, ha ha ha ha ha! and more, too, for the sniffling rabble must have something to feed

and gorge upon, so up out of fancy they've builded their tales of heated romance, babbling of Ahasuerus, Wandering Jew, Sleeping Beauty and Wild Huntsman, Barbarossa! Risen Christ and the Flying Dutchman, fictitious deathless one, among them only one who's really insured against decay, and that is I, myself, I, Richard Bacon! I with my secret of eternal life on earth!"

"But if you really have this marvelous secret," cried Pentland, "how is it that humanity has not heard of it?"

"Humanity!" snarled the scientist. "Let swine share my pearl, to paraphrase your pale one of Bethlehem! I detest humanity as much as you do."

"I?"

"You! Leave off pretense—those pale pale eyes are only panes of glass to me! I see deep down behind them, see how you have a spite against humanity, and from a lower motive than my own. I represent the search for Truth, but you, why you're merely a clot of superciliousness, stinking in your own exclusive corner. Well-born aristocrat, suckled in a bed, sweet delicate soul! You

hold yourself aloof, you dilettant, effete insipid whining coward! Hypocrite, you are as far from the heart of man as I am, hence do not preach! Hold your tongue, Mr. Pismire, and look upon me with proper respect! Put reverence in your gaze, for I am the son of Roger Bacon!"

The unflattering terms in this tirade had made Arthur Pentland flush hotly, but its denouement was so startling, and moreover was tossed off in such melodramatic style, that he leaned back in his chair in bewilderment; and when the scientist added to the absurdity of the situation by striking the pose affected by the tragedians of the day, Pentland burst into sarcastic laughter,

"My dear great man, allow me to point out that Roger Bacon lived in the thirteenth century, and that this is the nineteenth!"

"Thank you for the information," replied the scientist coolly, "and since this apparently is the occasion for an exchange of knowledge, I may add that Roger Bacon was a worker in the occult, a seer, an experimenter in alchemy and optics. He sought the philosopher's stone, and concocted what he called the elixir

of life, using it but sparingly, however, because of popular prejudice. The people of that day were well-nigh as bigoted as at present."

"Impossible that such an elixir—"

"Roger Bacon indulged in the practice of planting his seed in various types of female soil, and afterward seizing upon the young shoots for purposes of experimentation. He served a certain lady of noble blood, who later produced me as fruit. Despite the protests of my mother, who in due season died of what is romantically known as a broken heart, my father came secretly to France and took possession of my body. He took me back across the Channel, to experiment on me. I grew to manhood in his laboratory, his natural son."

Taking a candle from the table he stepped to the wall, and placed himself beside an oil painting hanging there,

"The portrait is of Roger Bacon. The light is rather dim, but you can see, no doubt, the unmistakable resemblance between us."

"But," stammered Pentland, as the scientist returned the candle to the table, "how

came it that he died, if he possessed the elixir of life?"

Richard Bacon shrugged his crippled shoulder, and replied in icy tones,

"That is a matter into which you had best not inquire. Suffice to say he originated the method. It came into my possession at his untimely death. Bah! I owe him nothing. His elixir was a faulty thing, able to increase the span of life a mere thirty or forty years. He was but a point in the circle of a particular line of achievement; it is I, who after years of laborious research and experiment, have perfected the idea, and in so doing have made myself the summation of the circle."

"But—"

"How old do I seem to you?"

"Why—why—perhaps forty."

"I am aged five hundred and sixty-seven years. On the fourth of June next," he added with a twisted smile.

"But . . . . . if you had really been rejuvenated. . . . . Ridiculous! you are no youth!" Pentland ended suddenly.

"Youth!" cried Bacon, with a gesture of contempt. "Rejuvenation! What are you

chattering about? Aha! I know—yes—I've heard such talk many times before, for with a rare exception all who hunger for more life want back their youth! They crave the stage of folly and indulgence, sensual appetite, pleasure, license with the flesh. Oh what a noble aim for noble man! What good justice that he's never stumbled on his fountain of eternal youth, since progress must always lean on those who can and will outgrow their swaddling clothes—a nutty thought for you, my friend! Rejuvenation! Can the oak return to the acorn? Not it, nor can mankind cast off age and snatch up youth, there to begin again *durch die Welt zu rennen, jed' Gelüst bei den Haaren zu ergreifen!* The thing's not possible, nor ought it to be. All that science can do is to maintain a regulative balance, perpetuating the organism in that stable harmony which exists at the time of interference, as flowers put into cages of blown glass endure just as they are, and of a certainty do not return to the bud."

He emptied his glass of liquor and got to his feet, walking somewhat unsteadily to the farther end of the room. In a moment he

returned, holding in his hand an instrument about six inches in length. He showed it to Pentland with suppressed excitement,

"Well, see it, then! Charged at its base with vital fluid, this instrument has the power to ejaculate into the blood—what? Ha! name it not, but call it that which can make the human organism live with new life, thus saving itself from extinction, cheat worm and slug."

Pentland shuddered, whereupon the scientist bent over him with a wild and gloating laugh,

"You tremble, but why not face what must be faced? Death the end, the fate of all save Richard Bacon, death from which there is no escape. Round go the shadows of the sundial, pushing you nearer and nearer the abysm,—you cannot halt them. You may prevent accident, you may guard against sickness and even circumvent it, but back of and beyond these vincible woes rises the inevitability of death in some form,—how escape? How will you, eh? Ha ha ha! It's dark and brown and heavy, that odor which foretells the coming of the Fleshless One! Time will fly, and he

will take you in his embrace, into the smothering earth, holding you there tight and fast, while from all directions the hordes and countless myriads of maggots come crawling, inching up, tunneling the coffin to converge upon the feast, swarming up over the putrid mess, each ambitious to be the first within those starting sockets, for mankind's highest glory, his brain, is what the worms love best of all, the gray sweet juicy stuff!"

"In Christ's name, no more!" gasped Pentland, cringing in his chair.

"No more!" cried Bacon then, a dark malignity flashing out upon his writhing insane face. "No more to live, such is the prospect that you face, and all others, too,—all men are transient flitting bits of mist except the Great Bacon! Aha! I read your eyes—I see your deep desire—you'd like to, would you?"

He had risen, and now Pentland, too, got slowly to his feet, clinging to the table for support, unable to speak, only staring in his fascination, staring to the eyes of Richard Bacon.

"You want it!" jeered the scientist. "I scourge you with my tongue, and yet you lap

it up, and give back no answer, no reproach, dear, dear! You fix upon a single theme, perpetual life at any cost, thinking thus to shut out fear, hack off the burdens of the flesh, and rid yourself of all that aching horror which hints at death. You'd like benignity and calm, a cloud of bliss on which to lounge and fashion out a couplet celebrating sweet pretty little happiness! Bliss is what you seek, but hear from me that life has little bliss. Life is struggle and labor, turmoil, fermenting change and give and take, a dark and tenebrous road with pain always and forever coming up behind, to prod the farer on his way, and to unending search. Search and test, experiment, that's life!"

Pentland stepped back a pace, but the scientist came pressing close to him, crying in a mad impassioned voice,

"Experiment, that's life! The world is but a cell, and life a reaction! This vital fluid I meant for my own blood—I said I used it on myself—I said what I did—as to did what I said, untangle that, and hear before you're through, that every single living body is different from all others in its chemistry; there-

fore what man can say what this potent stuff would do in the veins of some one not Bacon? The unforeseen and unexpected would result, no doubt, no doubt. The notion is intriguing, for though I despise humanity, the chemistry of life is my perennial interest. Bacon and acid make a sea urchin—did you hear that chicken's heartbeat? Pardon me if I press closer still,—you must not fail to hear that I am an experimenter, on slime out of the ocean, chickens, beasts, and even great humanity!"

Pentland was working his lips in a frantic effort to speak, but no sound came forth; only the scientist was to be heard,

"I come closer to you, closer. And so you wish for life? How curious! But is it death you fear, or is it life you fear? Full easily they change places, dissolve one into the other, yes! they are the same! You make no answer —how rude! Passivity explains it—it's creeping over you—you yield with trembling as I push you back, my instrument in hand. You tremble as a virgin does at being loaded up with fruit, but I'll say this, no love is animating me. The prod in me is a fierce passion of a sort unknown to you, you worm! that and

mere chance, proximity. I turn the venom of my reeling pounding brain to words, listen! If a birth comes out of this, there'll be a long gestation, ha ha ha ha! Before delivery of new life, there'll come upon you dismay and wretchedness, loathing and nausea, morning sickness evening faintness, disintegration of your flaccid soul—and all the while your body marking time, that complexities may be resolved to units, returning thence to Nought that hidden life may then build up, and at that point begins the sickish swoon that antedates your consciousness, and there begins the greatest pain and greatest darkness, for birth is release! and dawn is that which follows night. O timid, involuted man so chaste, free from the desire to make new life, be filled yourself with an immortal germ!"

Pentland had stepped back and back until he stood pressed against the wall, then with a mighty effort he found his tongue,

"Great Heaven, what fantasy is this? what folly? You're mad! a lunatic! Who are you? In whose name do you touch me? My senses reel until I see no longer Richard Bacon, but one of whom he's but a finger in

manipulation. I see a stranger who is known to me, a stalwart and broad-shouldered man, grand of aspect, terrible! Blond in the face, and ruddy,—out of my childhood's dreaming comes this frightening, yet reassuring—Who are you? Declare yourself, you great Unknown. O God, I can't resist. I cannot think, and yet I do not seem to care. Yes! life is sweet, and if you have it, give it to me! Fill me with it, that I may truly live. Perhaps we sin, but if we do, oh how glorious and ecstatic such a sin! Ah! you hurt me! I feel exquisite pain, delightful, eager, swooning pain! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h!"

Confusion Pierced By Sudden Comfort

I

. . . . . a voice, a far-away and distant voice, insistent, full of promise, calling a refrain over and over again,—and Pentland opened his eyes. Raising himself up on an elbow he listened, and all the time the voice came nearer . . . . . at length its confusion of sound burst into words,

"Sweep oh! I sweep ye clear oh! Sweep! Sweep oh!"

The listener scowled and lay back on his pillows—it was only one of those ragged and sooty-faced chimney sweeps who used to be seen drifting about the streets of Philadelphia early in the morning. Lay back on his pillows and was dozing off again when a step sounded outside the door,

"Anything you'd like, sir?"

Pentland started up in bed,

"No. I have everything I need."

In fact he had more than he needed, for sitting up had disturbed his internal arrangements; the footsteps had hardly begun to

retreat when he sprang out of bed and dashed across the room to the slop jar, where he indulged in a hearty vomit.

The chimney sweep was coming back, shouting out his willingness to purge flue and funnel of all obstructions, so that the flame would burn brightly and as never before, burn strong and with clear undimmed vigor. Sweep! Sweep ye oh! Clean and bright, like new! Sweep!

It was a rather musical refrain, but it annoyed Pentland; he threw up the window and suggested that the chimney sweep shut up and be off, and right now at that. The boy put his thumb to his nose and strolled on: Sweep oh! I sweep ye clear oh! Sweep! Sweep oh! Pentland glared him out of sight, and then made his toilet and went down stairs, —the place was a tavern.

Taverns have hosts, in this case one purple-red in the face and generous at the waist. Wiping his hands on his apron he hurried up: he wanted to know if the young gentleman had slept well, was desolated that he hadn't, but then—oh happy thought—all the ills of night can be cured by a hearty breakfast.

What was the young gentleman's pleasure? The young gentleman replied with an order for a cold pigeon and a glass of bitters, and having put this away, he reached for his hat.

The morning was fine, so that in spite of the early hour, the street was thronged with life. Along the middle of the thoroughfare carts and heavier vehicles went lurching with their burdens, while on the sidewalks teemed a motley crowd: tradespeople, niggers, sailors, factory workers, loafers, school children, whores, merchants, errand boys, clerks, beggars, ministers of the gospel. Along came a person with white hands and expensive clothes; Pentland stopped him to ask,

"I beg your pardon, but can you direct me to the residence of Mr. Crawford?"

"Mr. Crawford? Why, he has been dead for two weeks!"

"Dead?"

"Yes. He took his own life. It seems that he fell into a fit of despondency while visiting his friend Richard Bacon, the illustrious scientist."

Pentland's jaw dropped, his eyes widened, his cheeks paled, in short he seemed amazed,

or even astonished,—but the gentleman was staring at him inquisitively: he murmured his thanks and walked on, going in a daze, his legs so full of tremblings that they had hard work to take him across Independence Square and to the lodgings of the man of science. When at last he stood before the door, however, he grew calm. Crack! went the knocker.

The door was opened by a black woman.

Was her master in?

He was out of the city.

When would he return?

The servant silently closed the door in his face.

He turned away, walking numbly, absently, rambling along the street with head bowed in thought. Presently he found himself near a clot of people gathered before a broadsheet, a placard giving the results of a recent lottery. He looked up to see the face of Richard Bacon leering at him from the crowd. With an appropriate cry he sprang forward, elbowing his way here and there and back and forth and round about: no trace of the scientist.

Toward noon he paid another visit to the lodgings of Mr. Bacon, and gave the knocker

what may well have been the most violent blow it had ever sustained. He heard footsteps within, but the door did not open. Again he seized the unfortunate knocker, when his glance chanced to light upon the wall just to the right of the door: some one was steadfastly regarding him through a small hole. For a rigid instant he gaped and stared, and then he turned and went away,—there'd been something not altogether friendly in the dark intensity of that ambushed eye.

A few quick steps took him out of sight of Bacon's lodgings, but though he left the place farther and farther behind he still pressed ahead as if he were a fugitive from some sinister pursuer. He turned a corner and another, paused at a pump to wet his feverish lips, and hurried on. Up an alley, across a vacant plot, and to the outskirts of the city, and there he paused to look back, his face troubled with confusion, fear and anger, vague apprehension. One look, and again he hastened on, toward the open country.

Pentland fleeing Philadelphia! walking restlessly, hesitating, glancing back, going on, leaving the city for what is sometimes called

Nature,—but he was indifferent to her swelling glory. He never heard the birds, nor saw the new green that was brightening the tawniness of last year's sod, he never felt the wonder of the day, that joyous pleasant first of the month of May; he felt the sun, however, and now that the city was over the hill and out of sight he slowed up a little, stopped, sank down along the road to rest.

Laughter.

II

Laughter from a troop of young men and girls, tripping along the highway, set on the season's fun, and when they saw a little copse not far off the road they all ran that way, chattering and shouting until the grove echoed with their voices. One youth produced a hand axe, and this he brandished in most formidable style, while the others clapped their hands and darted off to search for what they were not long in finding.

It was a slender birch tree, supple, young, and fresh. Life ran in it clear and strong, but the crashing axe sent it to the ground, and eager hands seized the quivering thing and

dragged it to an open space. The boys stripped off its branches and turned it over to the girls, who tied colored ribbons to its top, and then the pole was erected by two lusty males; meanwhile the others were hunting for evergreen boughs.

"Oh say! there're all kinds of Quaker flowers over here!"

Run! girls, and they ran and began to pick as fast as they could. One of them protested at being outdone by her friends, whereupon a girl in a soft wine-colored frock put her own bouquet behind a fallen log to keep it safe, and went to help her. In a little while they were all provided with nosegays, save she of the helping hand. Unable to find the flowers she had put aside, she fell to searching all about. Well! where *did* I put them?

The others had returned to the Maypole; they began to cry impatiently,

"Hurry! Hurry! If you don't, we'll start without you!"

Thus threatened, she left off searching and hurried back to them. She snatched up a ribbon, and so did everyone else, and they all began to dance about the Maypole, skipping

on the grass and humming until as if by concert they broke into song,

"O let us skip and sing and play!
Be merry and joyful, please do, I pray!
For though cuckoo sings in April
And cuckoo sings in May,
And sings in June the cuckoo,
He in July flies away!"

This old English air proving a general favorite, they were repeating it for the third time when a shout made them look up: a farmer was coming through the wood, and as he advanced he let fly such a volley of profanity as was not customarily to be heard in that peaceful spot, or for that matter in any spot. The more printable of his remarks may be reduced to the following,

"Ye'll cut my birches and trample m'grass, will ye? Be off, ye godless sillies, or ye'll rue this foolery!"

His general attitude conveying some hint as to the manner in which he proposed to make them rue this foolery, the merrymakers retired with pardonable haste. The farmer

tore down the Maypole and shook his fist at the enemy; one of them turned round to call at him,

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

The farmer made no answer, but the taunt had put them in light spirits again, and as they went off toward the city it was with careless laughter and jests at the expense of the incomprehensible fellow who had called them godless sillies. Well, anyhow, they had kept their evergreen boughs, discovering which important fact they fell to tickling and flicking one another, a pastime so hostile to effective walking that the afternoon was far spent when they reached the city. A while of talk, then with waving hands and gay calls they parted,—she of the wine-colored frock went on alone.

Alone upon her way, this street and that street, around a corner, a little way more, and turned in a gate. Passing through a spacious garden she ran up the steps of a house which was apparently the residence of people of taste and wealth, and vanished through the door without looking back—had she thrown a glance behind she would have seen, even

though it was now twilight, the figure of a man standing at the gate.

III

Arthur Pentland at the gate, irresolute, striding off a little way, wheeling round and coming back, pausing, shifting his feet. The girl had disappeared within the walls off there behind the trees, and though he kept on peering—cautiously, to be sure—he saw no more of her. . . . . Dusk. . . . . Lights showed at the windows. . . . . An hour passed . . . . . two . . . . . three. The streets were filling with people on their way to the theatre, but from the house which was his one concern, no sign. Another hour dragged by, and then there came upon the air the far-off call of the night watchman, making the rounds of the city,

"Ten o'clock, and the moon is fullin'. Ten o'clock and a fullin' moon."

The cry droned away and away into the silences, and Pentland lifted his eyes to where amid a galaxy of attendant stars the moon stood in its second quarter, a fulling and expanding moon, bursting with radiance and

with life. He looked, and drew a great deep breath and glanced back at the house: the lights had vanished; the place was wrapped in blackness. Ah!

Going on stealthy feet he stepped through the gate, paused to look up and down the street, and went on into the grounds, threading his way among the shrubs and trees, and halting, at length, to stare upon the house which rose up dark a little distance farther on. Again the watchman called, again the silence of the night surged back. There was no more scraping and clopping of feet from the street, no more smothered laughter from the theatre crowd loitering homeward. Midnight . . . . . one o'clock, and still he lurked there.

Stood there gazing at the house, while in the heavens the march of the constellations foretold the approach of another day. The stars, all night long steadfastly burning down, were paler now, softly closing one by one, like slumbrous eyes that have watched the darkness through, and sink down to well-earned rest. Softly closing one by one, and as they drew away their light, a hush fell on the world.

All the city was still, the houses wrapped in slumber, and the very dogs, that through the night had barked their throats raw at the sailing moon, whimpered, stretched out to sleep. Silence came upon the world, upon the city, upon the garden where he stood, Pentland standing, watching, waiting for the life of that new day.

From somewhere a breath of air came stealing, a cool young breeze that stirred the half-naked shrubbery gently, very gently, carrying the smell of unfolding bud, uncurling leaf,—all these fresh and pungent scents were spread abroad as up from out of the earth the spring-time growth came pushing,—a little breeze, softly coming and as softly going, drawing away as a herald goes, when he has told of the grandeur that's approaching.

Grandeur called by the name of dawn, faint streakings in the eastern sky, luminous mist spreading from a source still hidden: the world began to tingle with the surge of newly-wakened life. A cock crew distantly, and as if thus signalled to their work, a host of sparrows dashed from the nooks that shelter them by night, sweeping down upon the streets as

a devouring army, explorers of doorstep and window sill, plucking tit-bits from rubbish heaps, content with that which lavish man neglects and throws away, a horde of bustlers chattering so incessantly no other kind of bird could sleep. Across the glowing sky a dark line showed: the crows had left their roosts to wing abroad to where the fields had feeding for them all.

Sparrows, crows, and now a thrush, one single solitary bird, a splendid creature of scintillating eye and fearless mien, a feathered beauty out of God's treasure chest, alighting not so far from Arthur Pentland to pour forth its exquisite song, a wordless melody so pure, so sweet, it seemed to him divine, the voice of love itself, love speaking not in human words but in ecstatic breathings beyond the power of alphabet and script. A thrush singing at dawn, and as it sent out its music the very air seemed freshened and the light more as a radiance,—then Pentland saw Her coming.

IV

She was approaching from the house, a slender girlish figure clad in simple white,

moving through the shrubbery with dignity and with grace. No pensive weakness showed in her, and no insipidity,—she was a gentlewoman clearly marked by poise, by strong and robust life kept in check. Her features were resolute yet delicately formed, her eyes large and luminous, grave thoughtful eyes, full of intelligence, and cradling mirth. In color they were a softly glowing brown, and her hair, carried back into a loose knot, was of a like shade, until it caught the gleaming of the morning light, and then it shone like polished bronze. The rays of the sun rising at her back appeared to Arthur Pentland as a heavenly nimbus for that fair head, a background and a setting for this lovely maiden, prime jewel of the universe.

Stepping lightly she came forward, treading buoyantly, coming with sprightly feet, her eyes upon the thrush; it had stopped singing to fly to her, perching on her outstretched hand to get the crumbs she was offering. With a smile she gazed upon the bird—suddenly she lifted her head and saw Pentland.

For a moment she stayed rigid with surprise, a hand pressed against her breast.

She did not cry out, but only stared at him, and as she looked her face grew calm. There was a frank straightforward inquiry in her eyes; Pentland could not meet them. His gaze shifted to the ground, where the thrush was retrieving the crumbs she had let fall, and it was only after he had gulped and gulped that he managed to say,

"I beg your pardon."

He ventured to give her an imploring glance, and bowed low, bowed humbly and with reverence, at which her manner softened a little. She inclined her head. Thus encouraged he went on,

"Madam. . . . . I. . . . . I. . . . . May I explain how I . . . . . ."

She inclined her head a second time.

"My name is Arthur Pentland," he continued, bolder now. "I live in Pittsburgh. I came to Philadelphia several weeks ago. Yesterday I was resting along the turnpike. I saw you and . . . . . ."

The girl smiled, but quickly sobered again, for a note of intense earnestness had come into his voice,

"I hope you won't consider this improper—

I mean what I want to say—but when I saw you for the first time, and I think so now, you are the very image and likeness of my mother. She—the cast of features—especially the lips—are different, but you have her wonderful brown eyes, and her wonderful brown hair, and your manner and gesture are exactly hers."

This complimentary speech appeared to upset the lady, but Pentland stumbled on, oblivious to the disturbance he was causing,

"It was this likeness which brought me here. I know it was rude. Please forgive me. I could not help it. I seemed to be impelled by an irresistible force. I had to follow you. I hardly knew what I was doing. I don't know yet, very well. Only. . . . . My mother was the only woman I . . . . . and now you. . . . . I—"

He broke off in confusion, and reaching into his pocket with a trembling hand, added hurriedly,

"I found the flowers you lost yesterday. Allow me."

With an abrupt gesture he held out the wilted bouquet. She hesitated, whereupon he exclaimed eagerly,

"May I keep them?"

She nodded silently. Pentland held the flowers to his heart, pale and trembling, the most prodigious efforts of his vocal organs bringing but one word from him,

"Thanks."

The girl appeared to be on the point of taking flight, but Pentland's breast had received such an accession of courage from the nearness of the bouquet that

"Tell me, are you offended?"

"No, I am not offended."

At these words, pronounced in a deliciously liquid and musical voice, Pentland was well-nigh swamped with rapture. He assured her that he was most eager to do everything possible to make amends, etc. for the imprudence etc. etc., of which he had been guilty, and ended it all with this bold stammer,

"Please don't think me impertinent—but—is there—do you know of any reason why we should not become acquainted—that is, through the regular channels of social intercourse?"

The amusement in her eyes went away before a sudden-coming gravity.

"I know of none," she answered, "provided you are able to satisfy my father of your character and position."

"Your father!" cried Pentland, as if he had never suspected that this lovely creature might possibly be a member of a human family. "Please tell me his name, and I shall take steps to make myself known to him."

"His name is John Galloway."

"John Galloway! John Galloway the merchant? Is it possible?"

Yes.

"What an extraordinary coincidence!" exclaimed Pentland. "I've often heard my mother speak of your family! If I remember correctly, she knew both of your parents in her youth!"

He was giving evidence of being willing to prolong the conversation indefinitely, but at this point the girl murmured in some uneasiness,

"You must go now; it won't be long till the servants are moving about."

"I'll go at once! But won't you tell me your given name before I go?"

She flushed and turned aside her head,

"My name is Laura Galloway."

"Laura Galloway! What a beautiful name! *Au revoir*, Miss Galloway, until we meet again."

"*Au revoir*, Mr. Pentland."

He executed a profound bow and walked rapidly away through the shrubbery and into the street. The girl followed him with her eyes until he had disappeared, and then smilingly she turned to the thrush and began to talk to it in a language meaningless to human ears, but one which birds understand very well indeed.

V

He'd said he would take steps to make himself known to her father, and he did. It was a hard week's work, and of a sort Pentland was unused to, but love is clever, and at last he met his man: Mr. John Galloway, sixty-two years upon his sagging shoulders, firm heartiness in his handclasp, red cheeks like apples, and a bald head full of anecdotes which began with racy hints and ended in bland innocence. Howdy do, and glad to know you, and then an afternoon when the once merchant

took Pentland home to tea, poured by the mother, a bustling little woman whose bright brown eyes seemed caged but hopeful behind her heavy spectacles. Ten minutes more, and the girl came in, and Pentland couldn't say if he did or didn't take sugar in his tea.

"There is something in Miss Galloway's manner," he stammered, to cover his confusion, "which reminds me of my mother."

"Eh?" exclaimed the retired merchant. "Well, well, if that is true, let me thank you for the compliment. Nothing could afford me more pleasure than the assurance that my daughter recalls the ladies of the past generation, for the olden time, sir, was celebrated for the charm and the grace and the dignity of its women. I have no desire to draw an invidious comparison, but many of the young ladies of to-day are far from possessing those virtues. However," he added, with a quizzical glance at the subject of discussion, "she is sometimes quite a romp."

"Why, father!" exclaimed the girl, and went still redder.

"It is really remarkable," observed Mrs. Galloway, "for as I recall your mother, Mr.

Pentland, she did sometimes incline her head and also use her eyes the way our daughter does. It is a coincidence."

"And what a coincidence," said Pentland, gracefully stirring his tea, "that both you and Mr. Galloway knew my mother when she lived in Philadelphia."

"As to that," said the merchant, "I should hardly use the term 'coincidence.' You see, in the old days the city was still so small that one knew all of the members of one's class as a matter of course. At the present time this is less likely to be the case; the city has grown tremendously since those days, and strangers have come in to such a degree as to disrupt the social classes of a half century ago. Philadelphia," he concluded, with a disapproving shake of his bald head, "is not what it used to be."

"I should like to have known it then," murmured Pentland, "although I find it quite charming as it is. It is so much richer in tradition and culture than Pittsburgh. I am delighted with it."

"That's very nice of you," smiled the mother. "We old people who have spent our

lives here are sometimes inclined to feel that things are changing for the worse, and I, for one, accept your compliments as a merited rebuke. What is it, daughter?" and she turned to the girl.

"I think Brother has come in."

She had no sooner spoken than her brother appeared, entering the room with elastic step and showing himself as a man of curly hair and bold blue eyes, his dress somewhat garish and certainly careless. A brilliant fellow, Edward Galloway had political ambitions, but he likewise had a penchant for carousing and practical joking, and this to such a degree that at the age of thirty-five he had not made very much progress toward a career, in fact, to put it in his father's words, he had made no progress whatsoever. This in no wise detracted from his good spirits, however, nor did it render him less popular with those who yielded to the charm of his forceful manner and the generous, if sometimes erratic promptings of his heart.

Such was the individual to whom Arthur Pentland was now presented.

Galloway ignored the formal bow which the

guest had begun to execute, and reached out and shook his hand vigorously. Affecting a shudder of horror when his mother suggested that he have some tea, he rammed his hands in his pockets and briskly demanded to know what they had been talking about. They told him, whereupon he burst out,

"Changes! Of course! Why not? What is life but change? There, sis," turning to her with a grimace, "do give me credit for that bit of philosophy, and grant that you're not the only budding thinker the family is showing forth! Yes, change, no doubt, no doubt, and woe to him who does not change as the conditions of his existence change. I can understand that the older generation is irked by incessant innovation, but as for me, I frankly like it. The country is shedding its exoskeleton. Growth is appearing from within, ha ha! Life is less formal, and freer, too, and certainly more interesting. Don't imagine," with a strong smile for Pentland, "that Philadelphia offers no diversions. I can show you no end of fun in our metropolis!"

Pentland bowed politely,

"I shall be delighted."

VI

Delighted, for what could be more agreeable than the open favor of the brother of one's beloved? At any rate, it seemed to Pentland a tremendous stroke of good fortune that Edward Galloway should have taken a fancy to him, and accordingly he made efforts to be attractive to his new friend. He readily accepted his suggestion that he buy several outfits of fashionable clothing, although it must be admitted that he chose fabrics more subdued in tone than those so vehemently insisted upon by Galloway. He also acquired his first watch, together with a fine chain, and of his own accord even adopted a toothbrush, an invention new to him, and one which he had always scorned because he had once heard his grandfather Morton denounce it. All of this Galloway greeted with acclaim, commending him for being a good fellow, and insisting that they drop into a tavern to drink a toast to "Pentland renovated and transformed," as he put it.

"I'm glad you approve," murmured he who'd been transformed, "and . . . . . and . . . . ."

"And . . . . . and . . . . . What is it you are trying to say, my rollicking blade? Come now, I don't have to bang my head against a lamp-post before I see it. I know very well where you want to send the conversation, so let's have no more pretense. You want to talk about my sister, don't you?"

"Well!" gasped Pentland, "I must say you take my breath with your directness."

"Directness!" cried the other, seizing his mug of beer. "And isn't directness a virtue? It's the very core and heart of life itself! Down with ceremony and form and all other circumambulatory nonsense! It only confuses the underlying principle, the truth! the meaty nub of things! And bravo for Edward Galloway, for there's a genuine and original thought,—an American thought, too—but my tongue is leading me astray. Now that you have your breath back, it's true, isn't it? you want to know if the heart of my fair sister is encumbered with any masculine vines!"

"I—I—I—"

"Well, since you demand it, I'll tell you. Sister has never been in love. She has a lot of men friends, but no lover, for which I'm

damned much obliged to Providence. Not many of the tosspots in our set are fit timber for a husbandly ship."

He paused to smile,

"Well, say it!"

"Then I will," Pentland blurted out. "You have been frank; let me be equally candid. It must be no great secret to you that I entertain sentiments toward Miss Laura, which—"

"What the devil kind of talk is that? In the King's English, you love her, isn't that it?"

"Yes," admitted Pentland, as soon as he could get his breath.

"So you *do* love her!" laughed the brother, striking the table boisterously. "And no doubt you want to know her sentiments, as you call them! Well, I suppose I must tell you, since you have no way of discovering them yourself. Sis likes you," he continued, serious all at once. "That's all I can tell you —but it's enough—at this stage of the game. You see, I'm the only one who's impulsive; the rest of the family are sedate and slow to form opinions. As for the old folks, they are much taken with you, you lucky devil. Sister

is twenty-five; you're presumably thirty-six or seven. The difference in age my parents might well consider desirable. Father's notion of the chaps of the present day is—er—rather uncomplimentary, to say the least. He looks upon you as commendably solid. Sensible, he calls it. Deuce take that word, anyhow!"

"I am deeply gratified if your father—"

"Very well, be gratified, but I say! if you are to become a member of the family, you'll have to please us all. Parents are already half-won, but I tell you damned plainly that you are not agreeable to me as a prospective brother-in-law! You have a great fault, and I'll be cursed for a Quaker if I let you marry my sis unless you promise to shed it!"

Pentland stared in amazed confusion, stammering,

"Why . . . . . why . . . . . what is it? Tell me, I beg of you."

"It's your damned seriousness! Of that do purge yourself, I beg of you! What meaneth this lowered eye, this head bowed down in revery, as if a hidden canker did nibble at the rose? How's that for Shakespeare? How now, fellow! Werther, *warum dieses* melan-

choly, this pale gray and unquiet eye? Cassius, you think too much! Think less, act more! Frisk up and down the street of life a little!"

"But I do!"

"Ye gods! you say you do, but think not to deceive the falcon eye of Edward Galloway! Thou dost it numbly, with excruciating awkwardness, as verily an elephant might go through a cotillion. Stiffly, my friend, with movement mechanical and ardor falsified, as if 'twere on a wager. You're cool at fun, and then you're hot, as if impelled by your *will*, and only your will, against the cake of custom which is your basic . . . . . can't think of a word to end that with. All nonsense aside," he ended abruptly, "the important thing is how you feel about Laura. Do you really love her?"

"Love her!" repeated Pentland, in a daze. "Why! she is everything in the world to me!"

"That's a good deal!"

"Every morning when I wake up, I am simply wild with joy if I know I am going to see her that day, but utterly miserable if I think I'm not going to see her. I don't even

think of anyone else, and when I am with her I am constantly in danger of overstepping the limits of good breeding—"

"Imagine that!"

"—because it is so hard for me to wrench myself away from her. I get so absorbed in all her virtues and accomplishments that I have no power to think, or act, or hardly breathe!"

"Bravo! that's love all right!"

A painful flush spread in Pentland's face,

"You speak very lightly, it seems to me."

"Maybe I do," said Galloway, gloomy all at once. "I don't mean to slur what you've said, though. I felt that way myself—once upon a time—too bad the experience can't be repeated. It comes but once, and after that —well, a stretched glove is a stretched glove. I won't shock you with my opinion of the so-called gentler sex, but I'll be God damned if the existence of my sister isn't about the only assurance I have that virtue hasn't abandoned what my father calls the female half of the present generation. By Jesus Christ, Laura is an angel!"

"That's exactly how I feel about it," cried

Pentland. "She's an angel, a pure and lofty soul. What a wonderful influence she has on me! You know, ever since I can remember, I've been obsessed with a nervous unrest—it was like a hint that I ought to be about some sort of hidden business, be on my way somewhere, searching for I don't know what. It was an urge that seemed to come from my very soul, a deep profound pulsation, driving me on to a kind of spiritual quest. It made me unhappy. I was wretched—afraid to follow so secret and curious a will-o'-the-wisp, but now that's all gone. I am convinced that your sister represents the end of my pilgrimage. Since meeting her, the whole universe has shed its sickish cast, its fog and confusion and turmoil and uncertainty; it has centered down to what is real, coming nearer and nearer to assume her outline and take shape in her. She is everything to me, Galloway, everything! If she only loved me I know I could get rid of the last remnants of my doubting and my sorrow, because in her I could extinguish all my longings, and merge my soul with what it has been seeking for so long, so long . . . . ."

VII

Eloquence! genuine eloquence! was what Galloway called this, but it was a burst rather than a steady flow, and was completely exhausted before the two friends left the tavern. There was not the slightest trace of Pentland's effusion when next the lover came into the presence of the unwitting occasion of it, indeed he sank to greater and greater confusions, until the mangled metaphors and hyperboles to which he gave stammering expression were perhaps the most extraordinary that ever assaulted the female ear.

Now Edward Galloway was a past master of what Ovid, the great physiologist, would have called the *spicula et faces amoris*, and when he saw that his friend knew nothing of the manipulation of the fair sex, he offered to act as his mentor. This suggestion, however, was repelled, for there are certain things which the most diffident of us insist upon doing for ourselves: one is making love and another is blowing the nose, really two very similar operations, for both may attract more attention to us than we would wish for, and both may seem to subject us to the ridicule of the

onlooker while appearing to ourselves (at least at the time) an unavoidable necessity.

Determined to propel his own bark upon the sea of courtship, and unable to call up those flowery speeches of which lovers usually have a greater stock than anything else, Pentland fell back upon the entertainments of the season. If the girl mentioned the river, he offered to take her boating, though he did not know an oar from a paddle. If she admitted that she liked the woods, they must go picknicking. Did she enjoy walking? So did he! What a coincidence! And what about the fashionable strawberry gardens, where everyone went for berries and cream? They must go there, too. All summer thus, and when the evenings grew cool, it was an exhibition of wax figures, and even a performance with the magic lantern. This last, however, pleased the girl more than it did Pentland, and as they left the hall and strolled homeward she murmured,

"I'm afraid you didn't like it. Did the children bother you?"

"Well, they *were* noisy, don't you think? But on the whole I enjoyed it. Did you?"

"Very much, thank you. I'm eager for the dancing season to begin, though. Oh that will be heavenly! You must learn to waltz, Mr. Pentland, you'd love it."

"Yes, yes, I quite agree. I shall have to learn. . . . . What would my mother say?" he went on with a wry smile. "She considered the waltz an innovation of very doubtful morality."

"Really? Poor little waltz, it's quite proper now. The most respectable people dance it."

"Yes, yes, of course. I have no doubt of it, no doubt whatsoever. I just mentioned it as a curious fact. I suppose my mother preferred the minuet. I remember her telling me, when I was a small child, how she enjoyed it. I can still recall her account of her gown, the color of it, its trimming,—every detail of her appearance."

"How odd! Really, Mr. Pentland, I think your mind's eye sees your mother as clearly as your physical eye sees me at this moment."

He answered gravely,

"My memory of her is very sharp and clear, especially so since I've known you, because your manner is so reminiscent of her. I used

to tell her over and over again that I had no interest in other women because no one could possibly compare with her, but you are so nearly a pattern—"

"Oh!" exclaimed the girl, casting about for some means of checking this, "Oh see! there is the celebrated scientist, Richard Bacon!"

Pentland stopped short,

"Where? Where?"

"Too late. He's gone. He seemed to be peering through the crowd at us. He is the illustrious scholar who is exciting so much interest,—but perhaps you know him?"

"No . . . . . I don't know him."

VIII

Didn't know him, but perhaps wanted to, for the next morning he walked briskly to the lodgings of the illustrious scholar. He gave the knocker one blow after another, but the door did not open, and though he fixed his eye upon the hole through which he had once been spied upon, he saw no sign of an ambush. So he went away, and came back later in the forenoon: no admittance. A third time, and yet a fourth, he visited the house and attacked the

unfortunate knocker: no answer. At length he dragged back to his room and stayed.

All day, and the next day, too, he languished there, gazing vacantly upon the floor, wetting his lips, twisting his handsome face, now rousing up to give himself a resounding whack on the brow, now falling back into a lethargy. Two days of squirming first upon one horn of the dilemma then upon the other, and after that a night full of moans,—it sounded just a little like praying. Perhaps he longed for light; if he did his prayer was answered, for the dawn came gently, and the world began to tingle with its new fresh life. After an hour or so he got up and made a listless toilet.

A knock at the door.

"Who is it?" he cried sharply.

"Edward Galloway! Himself, no other!"

"Come in."

Galloway strode into the room, gazing upon his friend with a mixture of concern and curiosity,

"Where in Hell have you been keeping yourself? Did you forget you were to come to dinner last evening?"

Pentland mortified,

"Oh I beg your pardon! I forgot it. How rude of me. Your family must have thought me a boor."

Galloway threw himself on the bed with a laugh,

"Well, there was comment, to be sure, to be sure. Sister looked pensive and sighed at regular intervals throughout the meal, though the roast was uncommonly good and the pastry excellent. Ha ha ha! Father, well! he and mother swore up and down you were ill, for most positively, says they, a gentleman with manners polished to the dazzling point won't fail a social engagement without good cause. As for myself," he grinned, "I vouchsafed my own little brand of remark. Declares I, he's plottin' deviltry, for I've observed his looks to be as black as his hair of late, as if perchance and peradventure holding inner converse with the denizens of some sable cave in Stygian land!"

He broke into careless laughter; Pentland halted his restless pacing and turned to him,

"A slight indisposition, that's all. I hope you'll carry my apologies to your family. Er,

by the way," he continued, with elaborate carelessness, "do you happen to have the acquaintance of Richard Bacon, the illustrious scientist?"

Galloway's smile dissolved into a scowl,

"Richard Bacon, the illustrious scientist! Not I, though I do know a knave who calls himself by that name."

"Knave?"

"Rogue, then," growled the other. "Villain, rascal, scoundrel, take your choice of terms."

"Well," said Pentland, with a hollow little laugh, "you hold no high opinion of him, that's certain. But tell me, seriously, er . . . . . er, what sort of . . . . . er . . . . . person is he?"

"A bad sort. I've heard it rumored he was an accomplice of Cagliostro,—you know, the fellow who ran all over Italy selling a pretended elixir of immortal youth, and got mixed up in the Necklace Affair in France. This Bacon is said to have been chased out of Europe, and if I had anything to do with the ordering of our lovely city, he'd leave Philadelphia with boot-marks on his backside, believe me truly!"

"But . . . . . they say he is a very learned man."

"As to that, the devil only knows. He has the reputation of being a skin stuffed tight with erudition, but I happen to know that in much of his so-called scientific experiment he is more charlatan than scholar. Oh he's clever, all right, clever as sin, damn him, but who wants to be clever at the expense of his wits?"

"What!"

"Of course!" laughed Galloway. "He's a madman. Didn't you see that lunatic stare he had the other day?"

"When? Where?"

"Why, Thursday, the day we went hunting up the river. He was following us, the damned rascal, but he may discover that's dangerous pastime. When a fellow assures *me* that we're partners in a trick, it'd better not turn out that I'm the only one that's holding the sack. He's a two-faced bastard,—but why this interest in him?"

"Eh? Why—why nothing. I was simply curious. I'd heard gossip about him, is all. He seems to be an interesting character. I

thought it . . . . . it would be entertaining to . . . . . to . . . . . meet him."

Arthur Pentland was destined to meet him sooner than he had expected.

IX

Sooner than he had expected, on the following Christmas Eve, in fact, though as he stood at his looking glass dressing and perfuming himself, he had no suspicion that it was Richard Bacon, Esquire, who was to render the evening memorable. Indeed, he was not even thinking of the villain, rascal, scoundrel, take your choice of terms, his mind being engaged with Miss Laura Galloway. It was she, and she alone, who possessed his thoughts, —and his eye also, when an hour later he was ushered into her presence.

Pentland had never seen her lovelier, and he was ruminating upon the advisability of telling her so . . . . . her father entered the room, his face aglow with the Holiday festivities of which he was so fond. A genial smile and a hearty handclasp went out in welcome to the guest, and when Pentland murmured some phrases complimentary to the blaze leap-

ing on the hearth, the old gentleman's smile broadened until his cheeks stuck out like rosy apples.

"The open fire," he exclaimed, nodding briskly, "is the very heart of the household."

"I quite agree with you," said Pentland, and stretched his hands to the warmth. "As my mother used to say, there is nothing like an open fire."

"Never a truer word spoken! A fine blaze of logs, what could be more pleasant? The sight of the flames, the smell of the wood smoke, all this has a wonderfully heartening effect upon the human sentiments. I've heard it said that some of our newly-wedded young people are intending to build without fireplaces, but for my part I had as lief be quartered in a cellar as in a house not liberally provided with them."

Pentland quite agreed.

"Yes," continued Mr. Galloway, with a musing gaze into the flames, "what would a home be, without fireplaces? Especially at the Christmas season! Ah! to see a good old Yule log, a great sturdy oak log dragged in out of the snow with ropes and placed upon

the hearth as a foundation for the fire, what *could* be finer? But alas! the Yule log is but a memory with us, and any attempt to revive it would end in ridicule. Even the tales of oldtime Christmases in Merrie England are smiled at nowadays. The greater number of the young generation have no understanding of old customs, and certainly no reverence for such things. To them it is all a weak indulgence of ancient folk, and just a little silly, also."

"Papa dear," interrupted Laura, and kissed him lightly on the bald head, "you are so intent on your Yule log that you are neglecting my candelabra."

The two gentlemen made haste to turn and admire the candles which she had lit about the room. Pentland gave her a polite compliment, while the father beamed his pleasure and said,

"Very pretty, my dear, very. You've arranged them beautifully, upon my word you have. What a treasure you are," transferring his gaze to her, "a treasure,—there is no other word for it. Mr. Pentland, if ever there was a peacemaker between the old and the new, it

is my daughter. She has a genius for reconciling tradition and innovation, and she does it with such grace that even an old fellow like myself finds himself almost content with the hurly burly of modern life."

"If you will excuse me, papa," murmured the embarrassed girl, "I'll go see if the kitchen is decorated. The servants have been quite indifferent about the mistletoe this year."

The father nodded, calling after her as she hurried away,

"Have them put up plenty of greenery. I maintain," he continued, turning back to Pentland, "that the joy of the season should be apparent throughout the entire house—but here is Mrs. Galloway."

The mother had come in, and Laura presently returning, they went into the dining hall, a spacious chamber warmed by a huge blaze of logs upon the hearth and lighted by a brave galaxy of candles. In the center of the apartment stood the supper table, covered with stiff white linen and decorated with sprigs of holly and glistening silver. Good smells came drifting from the board: it was loaded with dishes, and the dishes with a variety of

substantial viands of the old-fashioned variety, steaming hot.

"But Edward," exclaimed the father, as they took their places.

"He hasn't come in yet," said Laura gently.

Mr. Galloway bowed his head and said grace, but when he raised his eyes and spoke again, there was a mild irritation in his voice,

"Larking about in public, I suppose,—on Christmas Eve of all times. Ah! home and fireside mean little to that fellow."

"My dear," said Mrs. Galloway, "won't you begin to carve? Otherwise I'm afraid Mr. Pentland will think us lacking in hospitality."

"God forbid!" cried her husband, seizing the knife and fork. "Hospitality, Mr. Pentland, is one virtue which I frankly claim, and moreover one which I strive to retain, particularly in these days when it seems to be falling out of fashion. Good old hearty gatherings at table are more and more infrequent nowadays. . . . . I am tempted to believe (here he paused to contemplate a further attack upon the already prostrate fowl), I am tempted to believe that the time will come when the younger generation will invite their

guests to take Christmas dinner with them at an inn or some other public hostelry!"

At this fanciful prediction there was a ripple of general laughter, and between the jovial talk and the more tangible comfort heaped upon his plate, the host threw off the annoyance which the absence of his son had occasioned him. As for Pentland, he used his teeth to good advantage, though if he had been asked he would no doubt have declared that he preferred gazing at a certain lovely face to all the hot minced pie which the kitchens of the world afforded.

"Husband," said Mrs. Galloway, "I wouldn't insist, if I were you. I remember his telling me that he has suffered from indigestion ever since he was a child, and minced pie, especially as we make it at this season, is not calculated to improve stomach disorders."

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried the old gentleman. "Minced pie could not possibly hurt anyone, especially on Christmas Eve. Mr. Pentland!"

"To be perfectly candid," said Pentland, with an inclination of the head in the direc-

tion of his hostess, "I think I'd enjoy a second piece. It is true, as Mrs. Galloway reminds me, that I've always been troubled with indigestion, but curiously enough it has lately deserted me. In fact, now that I think of it, I have been free from it ever since my arrival in Philadelphia. The climate must agree with me."

"I am delighted to hear it," exclaimed Mrs. Galloway.

"I suppose," remarked the host, "that you have been to visit your ancestral home, the old Morton house?"

A shadow passed over Pentland's face.

"I have," said he, soberly. "That is to say, I visited what remains of it. They've torn down the old mansion to make room for some small wooden houses, you know, really nothing but chicken coops. The oaks have been cut down, and a row of poplars planted in their stead, and the old-fashioned garden that my mother used to tell me so much about was all trampled down,—it was a most disheartening sight."

"It is only another instance of the profound changes which are going on all about us,"

rejoined the merchant. "The American Revolution is commonly spoken of as a political upheaval, but in a very insidious way it was a social cataclysm as well. I insist that we are not viewing the matter with the seriousness it deserves."

Miss Galloway turned to Pentland with a smile,

"Father is now launched upon his favorite topic."

"It is a very serious matter," continued the old gentleman argumentatively. "The Revolution reduced the influence of the well-born classes, and as the older generation of statesmen have died out, politics have come more and more under the control of men distinctively American in training and ideals. The development has both its good side and its bad side, but I confess I see but bad side in the decay of culture which has accompanied this political change. The average American scoffs at learning and tradition, and certainly at manners; at the same time he actually venerates the physical and violent side of life. This I contend amounts to a reversion to barbarism, and the time will come when the

American people will fetch up in a cul-de-sac of materialism. They will discover, then, to use the old Morton estate as a figure of speech, that they have destroyed a stone mansion to erect flimsy dwellings of wood, and that instead of sturdy long-lived oaks they have planted soft poplars!"

Pentland quite agreed, but Mrs. Galloway did not,

"I think you give the Americans too little credit for the ease with which they right themselves when once they are convinced that they have been pursuing a wrong course. And then again they have such tremendous energy."

"Energy they certainly have," admitted her husband, "but energy is to be commended only when rightly used. These people are over-confident to the point of imprudence, which is more likely to pile blunder upon blunder than it is to cause progress in the right direction."

Pentland had no opportunity to quite agree with this, for Mrs. Galloway responded very quickly,

"Over-confidence is a youthful trait, John. We'll outgrow it."

But her husband wasn't so sure of this,

"My dear, you and Laura are forever palliating the faults of the Americans by declaring them a young people, but it seems to me that it is about time that they were showing signs of growing up. An infant that continues an infant too long is properly called a monstrosity rather than a normal individual, —don't you think so? The nation is composed largely of individuals who are childishly turbulent. They fret at convention and tradition, and are so active that they must constantly be jumping from one thing to another, like grasshoppers. In my opinion, this lack of root will prove an effective enemy to national development."

"I fear you are too quick to condemn," persisted Mrs. Galloway, whose eyes had grown very bright behind their spectacles. "This new America is primarily a land of action, and though it may be turbulent, and seem to *us* to be without root, it is not necessarily so. I myself am of the opinion that it is all a phase of a wonderful quest, at the end of which the mature physical body of America is to find its spiritual self, its soul."

"Ah! wife," exclaimed the old gentleman, and made her a deferential bow, "that is a beautiful thought, and I trust you are right and I wrong,—but I am not reassured by the flavor of the times. Whether from the influence of the French Revolution or from the inherent nature of democracy, our life is being saturated with the doctrines of complete and final emancipation, emancipation from political authority, emancipation from tradition, emancipation from religion. I am convinced that secret forces are forming in array against our Christianity, and that they are going to crack its shell and promulgate throughout America such a babel of ideas as will result in moral confusion of the gravest proportions. Well, Laura?"

"I don't mean to interrupt you, papa, but may I be excused?"

"For what purpose?"

"I have some gifts to distribute, and I've promised to bring them this evening."

"But surely you aren't going out alone?"

The girl hesitated,

"Edward was to help me, but as he is not here, perhaps Mr. Pentland—"

Delighted.

"Well, well," murmured Mr. Galloway, as they rose from the table, "I suppose you must go, but come back as soon as you can, both of you. A home without children on Christmas Eve is a sorry spot. By the way," brightening up, "if you meet Edward bring him back, and some of his friends with him, and we'll play a few old-fashioned games: hoodman blind, and shoe the wild mare, and even bob apple, if you like . . . . . old games . . . . . now half forgotten . . . . . time brings many changes, eh mother? . . . . . Well, well, run along, but hurry back . . . . ."

X

They set out.

It had begun to snow, and as the flakes drifted out of the heavens and down upon the city, they wove a lazy veil of spongy white, through which the street lamps shone with the radiance of candles. The snow had made the pavement slippery, so that the girl had to hold tight to Pentland's arm, a circumstance which put him in such a daze that he would gladly have walked to Jericho, and probably

would actually have done so, but—here we are—that house to the right—they proceeded to distribute their cheery words and more substantial presents among the poor, and at last with empty bag and full hearts, started back.

The streets were filling with people, until the evening air rang with their laughter and with the merry tinkle tinkling of the bells dashed to and fro by horses drawing sleighs. The snow had turned to slush. Pentland was afraid Miss Galloway's shoes were so thin she'd catch cold. She was smiling at him, insisting that she never caught cold. All at once they were surrounded by a number of masked figures, grimacing and making uncouth sounds in imitation of various animals. One fellow wore a peaked hat of red and yellow, and from the looks of the rest of his costume he was apparently intended to represent George Washington. To Pentland's rage this unknown lurched up to Miss Galloway, growling,

"Give us a kiss, pretty one."

The girl smilingly jerked off the mask: it was her brother.

In the uproar that followed, young Galloway demanded that Pentland join the mumming party, and would hear of no refusal. With jest and song the masqueraders escorted the girl to her door, and having applauded her invitation to come back for indoor games later in the evening, they seized Pentland and hurried off. Another mask conjured up, he was disguised as "Little Devil Doubt," and away they went, jostling their noisy way through the crowded streets, and coming, at length, to the house of one held to be fit meat for a mummer's jest. Ordering his followers to form in a semicircle before the door, Galloway adjusted his mask and gave the knocker a violent blow, shouting,

"O here come I, old Beelzebub!
Open ye up to my rubadub dub!"

The door opened and a face appeared, whereupon a mummer disguised as Father Christmas cried out,

"Are we welcome or are we not?
If not, we'll never be forgot!"

"Welcome!" cried the householder, good-

naturedly peering at his visitors in the effort to discover who they really were.

Galloway (or rather George Washington) now burst out,

"Pull out thy purse to pay,
Or else we'll never go away!"

Thus admonished, the victim tossed them some coins, and having caught these up with shouts of laughter, the mummers hurried off to the nearest tavern to spend what they termed their earnings. Beer and cakes consumed, they went out again, gay and noisy and voluble, though it must be admitted that they went through the traditional pageant with no very clear notion as to the basis of it, much as tears are shed by young girls between the age of hay and grass. They visited another house, another and another, returning after each prank to the tavern selected by them as head-quarters,—here they sat at about the hour of ten. The cakes had been forgotten, beer abandoned for brandy, and the mummers were rapidly filling with good spirits when a shabbily-dressed youth came up to their table,

"Lottery tickets, gentleman. Take a chance and win a fortune."

"Get the devil away from here!" cried Galloway, in a voice strongly laced with liquor.

"No more lotteries, eh?" laughed Father Christmas, and poked George Washington in the ribs. "Let's have a throw at dice, what say?"

He seized the box and started to throw, but Galloway struck up his hand, growling,

"To hell with dice, and lotteries, too. I'm through."

At this there was a laugh from all save Pentland, who was yet to see the force of the allusion.

"So the code didn't work!" guffawed Father Christmas. "Bah! you might have known better! What could the Cabala have to do with the calculation of lucky numbers! Oho! Bacon got the best of you there!"

"So he did," admitted Galloway, staring savagely upon the sanded floor at his feet, "but I'll get the better of him for that trick some day."

"I say!" exclaimed a mummer who had not yet spoken, "let's pay the rascal a visit this

very night! If he doesn't give us dole we'll give 'im a trouncin', what d'ye say?"

"Done!" cried Galloway, and having strengthened his voice with the remnant of the brandy in his glass, he made some violent comments on the genealogy of Richard Bacon, Esquire, and sprang to his feet and jammed on his mask, thereby transforming himself into George Washington. Followed by his fellow mummers, he issued into the street, staggering in a manner ill befitting the father of a country. With his club placed belligerently upon his shoulder, he fell to singing,

"Here come I, George Washington, honor bright!
Many a Britisher did I subdue,
And ran a bloody Tory through,—
He'll give five shillin's, else he'll fight!"

After this he furnished the neighborhood with a second song, punctuated with hiccoughs even more plentifully than the first,—and looked up to see Bacon's house standing before them. Seizing his club, Galloway began to pound at the door, crying,

"O hell is dark! O hell is deep!"
O hell is full of mist!
What pity when a wicked soul
Departeth Savior Christ!"

A negress appeared at the door, at which the mummers applauded.

"Hark ye and give heed, base slave!" cried Galloway. "We are hungry Knights, gone astray in search of a certain piece of bacon. He hath refuge in this place, we know damned well, so hoist him forth, or by the gods that strengthen the arms of Knights, we'll knock the house about your ears!"

To this extraordinary suggestion the servant replied that her master was ill, and asked them to go away, but Galloway rejoined with some reflections upon the practices of black women in general and one in particular, ending his discourse on African virtue with a bellow to the effect that the double damned and triple accursed Bacon had best appear.

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than the pale face of the scientist appeared in the doorway. His features were trembling with rage, but before he could speak, Galloway made a threatening gesture with his club,

"Five shillings, you son of a whore, or else a drubbing this very minute!"

With a cry Bacon suddenly struck him in the face, knocking him down the flight of steps to the street.

"You dog!" screamed the scientist, and sprang after him. "I—"

Sprang—stumbled over the foot of Father Christmas (which somehow got in his way) and fell headlong down the steps,—and so he never finished his sentence: one does not feel like talking when one has a broken neck.

XI

There is an ancient proverb to the effect that when the ox is down, every one sharpens his knife,—and such proved to be the case with Mr. Richard Bacon, the illustrious scientist.

He gave up the ghost on Christmas Day, and although there were those who denounced the prank played by the mummers, public opinion soon turned in another direction: each passing hour added to the list of persons who volunteered disparaging remarks concerning the dead man. In short, it was the consensus of belief that the fellow had dabbled in matters

too near the occult and the sacrilegious to be a desirable citizen, and that upon the whole and in general and after all has been said and done, the city was better off without his dubious and baleful personality.

To be sure, there was a judicial inquiry,—at which Edward Galloway came forward and frankly acknowledged himself the leading figure in the escapade, taking upon his own shoulders full responsibility for the mummery at the door of the said Bacon. He manfully declared the whole thing a practical joke, and it was proved that the scientist had not only struck the first blow but had come to his death accidentally, while pursuing the felonious assault. These circumstances, together with the high standing of the Galloway family and the unsavory reputation of the dead man, persuaded the magistrate to dismiss the culprits. He warned them, however, to forego their antiquated and nonsensical frolic in the future.

"Hoity-toity!" exclaimed Galloway, as in company with Arthur Pentland he left the presence of the magistrate, "that's the end of mumming in dear old Philly. First cockfighting is unseemly, then horse racing is ungodly,

and now *à bas* with mummery! The place is going to the dogs, that's my opinion of it. I give it thirty weeks to be turned into a national retreat for old ladies!"

Pentland continued to stride along with moody face, saying nothing.

"Come!" cried Galloway, "don't be cast down. The fellow was a scoundrel, and sick enough to die anyway. We aren't responsible for his untimely demise, as the books would say. Don't think any more about him."

"I am not thinking of him."

"No? Then in the name of Heaven who *is* occupying your mind so absorbingly that you don't laugh at my clever remarks? Aha! I begin to see, cried the blind man! A glass of rum you're thinking of sis."

"I am."

"No doubt of it! You generally are thinking of her,—thinking, that's all. Pentland, you've got furrows in your brow from your damned excogitations, but doers are better than thinkers. I begin to believe you don't love her after all."

"Not love her!" cried Pentland. "I adore her! I worship her as a divine being. I've

hesitated because of a point of honor. For months I have suffered the torments of a lost soul, but at last everything has cleared up. There is no longer a barrier between us. Great God, don't make sport of me. I've been like a drowning man, and she is the straw I clutch at. Oh Christ! I can't live without her! do you hear me?"

Galloway slapped his friend on the back, exclaiming,

"Bravo! But I say! if all this ecstatic ecstasy doth in your ecstatic bosom reign, why the devil don't you purge it? Don't go on reading Pope's verses to her. Ask her to marry you, confound you!"

"I will!"

"The idea just occurred to you, eh? Come, old chap, I'm a good fellow. I'll help you, though I'm far from certain as to her sentiments, as you call them. Call to-morrow afternoon. I'll see to it that she's alone and in proper mood. What d'ye say?"

"Yes!" cried Pentland. "Let it be to-morrow! I must know my fate!"

"All right, then, toss off your melancholy. And don't think any more about this scamp

Bacon. To-morrow's another day, another day and a new day."

"A new day!" cried Arthur Pentland, with shaking lips. "To-morrow is a new day! Oh it *must* be! A new day! A new day! A new day!"

Time Displaces His Wife As Bedfellow

I

The servants in the old brick house in Pittsburgh had awaited the coming of the new mistress with trepidation, but when at last the talked-of day arrived, and the master stepped through the door with his bride on his arm, the staring blacks needed but one look at the face of Laura Pentland: they smiled.

The passing days showed her kind to them yet never mawkish, firm without harshness, rich in tact but not weak. Her insight they repaid with confidence, her sympathy with an intense affection,—and she, she took her place in the household with ease, discharging her duties with modest dignity, and finding it all a very charming happy life. Everything went smoothly and in the old grooves, so that very quickly Arthur Pentland sank back into the routine he had been used to before his mother's death.

"I wouldn't have believed it possible," he murmured, as they sat on the front porch one day.

"Wouldn't have believed what possible?" smiled the wife.

"That peace could have come back to me. . . . . Mother's death left me utterly wretched, lost, miserable. I felt myself sinking into a horrible maelstrom, and then I met you. You've brought me comfort and all the content I'd known with Mother. She would have loved you, Laura."

"I should like to have known her."

"We were so close," he went on musingly. "Always doing little things together. She selected those rhododendrons over yonder and I set them out; it must be twenty years ago, and yet I recall every detail of it."

"Ah! there is your redoubtable memory again! For shame, sir, you make me feel weak-minded, for the pocket of my own recollection has no such depths. By the way," in a bantering tone, "perhaps you can tell me, since your memory is so vivid, who broke the sundial out there by the lilac bush!"

She turned to him carelessly: his face was white and very tense.

"Who had that repaired?" he gasped.

"Why, Arthur, I did. I thought it would

please you. It helps to keep the grounds as they were when you were a boy. Are you offended?"

"No no no, of course not. I was merely surprised, that's all. Let's not say anything more about it. It is a matter of no consequence. A sundial is only a sundial."

II

A sundial is only a sundial, really a matter of no consequence, being no more than a languid march of tiny shadows round and round, a pointless march save that it wraps and binds to robust heartiness the life that's infancy and youth and early middle age,—but this is all a gift, so common a gift that we accept it carelessly, and think no more about it. Only a sundial, really, soft shadows stealing softly round, a pointless march save that it saps and sucks and sobers us when life is past high noon: far off in Philadelphia the mother of Arthur Pentland's wife had paid her debt to Nature. Sundial that marks the shadows stealing on white heads, marks years and months and days and then the precious minutes: far off in Philadelphia the father of

Arthur Pentland's wife lay on his bed, his face blanched to the hue of the pillow there beneath it; the once red cheeks were pale, the lips shrunken into silence; he had retired from business long years ago, and now he resigned from partnership in earthly life.

"With both of them gone," said Mrs. Pentland one thoughtful day, "I fear for Edward. He is wayward, you know, and now there is no one to hold him in check. May I invite him here?"

"Of course."

And so she wrote warm urgent letters to the wayward one, posting them to Maryland and later on to Georgia, to somewhere in Kentucky, Illinois and Indiana, for he was wandering. Careless scrawly notes came back to her; she abandoned hope, then one quiet afternoon a strong voice sounded at the door, the gaping servant was shoved aside, and in he strode.

Edward Galloway stood before them, the same, yet different: his eyes were just a little bloodshot, his face was full of telltale saggings, the mirth that leaped out of his bold blue eyes was somehow rough, violent. The hair upon

his curly head had been cropped short and not very evenly. Edward Galloway, in the year 1830.

"Hello there, sis!" he cried, and seized her in his arms. "Hello Pentie, how are ye, how are ye? God! how limp your hand is, but say! you're looking fine. Not a day older than when I saw ye last."

"Why Edward!" exclaimed Mrs. Pentland, rearranging her hair, "how roughly you're dressed—like a laborer."

Galloway threw himself into a chair,

"Deuce take it, sister, you're behind the times. Know ye not that Jackson is President, and therefore all class distinctions must go? We're all to dress alike. No longer aristocrat I, but Citizen Galloway. Salute me, in the name of the common man!"

Arthur Pentland surveyed his brother-in-law from head to foot,

"So you are turning democrat?"

"Turning?" guffawed the other. "I've turned! I'm out to discover what's in this notion of democracy."

"There's nothing in it," said frowning Pentland, "nothing but evil."

"Tush! tush! as my old father used to say. Nothing is altogether evil or altogether good. Why, even I have my bad points! Only children see things all of one color, labelling this all good and wonderful, and that all bad and horrid. You see, I'm turning moralizer!"

Pentland made no reply, though it was to be observed that as the days passed, his hospitality drooped and cooled.

This did not dampen Galloway, however: he ran all over the town, climbed Flare's Knob to have a look, and came back full of enthusiasm,

"By God, Pentie, what a place! Bursting with life! Bustling, hustling, tussling, rustling! Thought ye said it was a quiet village in a sequestered vale!"

"Pittsburgh is changing. There was a time—"

"Was there, now! Well, let it go to the devil, and don't be lamenting it, for Lord's sake. To listen to you rattling your jaw, a fellow would think the past was perfect. You harp on the old used-to-be time till it bulks up in your mind more than its due. You magnify it through your . . . . . your, well!

whatever you magnify with. Yes, and you glorify it till it becomes a virtual lie. Now I, by the Great Horn Spoon, I enjoy the present, and if I look anywhere else, I cast mine little eye upon the future—"

Mrs. Pentland came into the room.

"—not the past. Hello, sis!"

"The future!" retorted Pentland, and walked across the room to sink into a chair beside his wife, "I dread to think of it. Democracy will most certainly reduce the country to anarchy. This universal manhood suffrage is already placing all power in the hands of the poor and the ignorant and the propertyless."

"What of it?" grinned Galloway, winking at his sister.

"What of it! If you were to live in Pittsburgh a while, you would soon see what of it. Why! in this town no one but an ill-bred and loud-mouthed ignoramus stands the slightest chance of being placed in office. Upon the one occasion that I did go to the polls—you will remember, Laura, it was at your instigation—I came away with oaths ringing in my ears, and my boots covered with

tobacco juice. It is in such pigsties that fellows like Carson are chosen to govern us!"

"Who's Carson?" demanded Galloway, searching his pockets for a cigar.

"Our mayor," said his sister.

"Our champion boor," said his brother-in-law. "Laura and I were so unmindful as to accept his invitation to dinner some time ago, and such a penchant for loud talk and coarse laughter I have rarely remarked at a gathering of supposedly civilized people. The mayor stared every one out of countenance, and when he wasn't bragging of the price of his furniture he was devouring his food like a beast."

Mrs. Pentland,

"It is true his manners are unpolished, but you must remember, Arthur, that he began life as an artisan. He has had to work hard. I imagine he hasn't had a chance to perfect himself in the social graces."

"Nonsense, Laura," cried *factus homo*. "He has no desire to do so. Besides, gentlemen are born, not made."

"Hear! Hear!" exclaimed Galloway, ostentatiously striking a match on the seat of his trousers.

"Breeding is breeding," maintained Pentland, "though it's *getting* so the terms 'lady' and 'gentleman' are applied to people of *every* sort and condition. The wife of our mayor tells as a jest—a *jest* mind you, that her hired girl is imitating her methods of hairdressing! The hussy takes every occasion to avoid using the word 'mistress' and to speak of herself as a *lady!* Mrs. Carson *laughs* at the creature's pretensions, and secretly encourages them, I have no doubt. In this topsy-turvy land vulgarity and impertinence are considered virtues. Politeness has become a sign of servility, and praise is meted out to every illiterate upstart who has the effrontery to proclaim himself as good as his superiors. I quite agree with my grandfather that—"

"My God!" cried Galloway, "he's bringing his grandfather back to earth!"

"I beg your pardon!"

"Do so, and be damned to you, but don't go ramming a dead man down my throat. Your grandfather was an old-time aristocrat, and as they say out West, 'we hain't got no time fer sech.' "

Pentland left off chewing his moustache to announce coldly, deliberately,

"If the country had a few more citizens of the type of my grandfather, it would most certainly be better off than it is at present."

"Worse off, you mean," laughed the other. "Now, listen! this is all nonsense about aristocracy. Your notion of the socially elect is unhealthy. It embeds you in senseless custom and draws you away from life, distorts your view. It clogs you with form and old tradition, and offers you shadow for substance. Pentie, you're standing still, I tell you. You've got the same old exclusive notions you always had—must've inherited them from your grandfather along with this house. Say! why don't ye be like me? Turn democrat and brim over with life, gents, or your money refunded! Why, I generate a new idea every five minutes! Some of 'em are a little loose in the joints, 'tis very true, quoth he, but I make up in quantity what I lack in quality. Quality! bah, the word's as weak as that tea we had last night. Quantity! that's what we want, and what we've got. Numbers, size, bigness, behold America! What a country!

It's immense! just spilling over with energy and fun! Ever see a gander-pulling? Great sport, Pentie. I was telling one of these bloody Englishmen about it out in Indiana, and he tried to tell me it was vulgar. Know what I did to him?"

"I'm sure I haven't the slightest idea."

"Threw him out the stagecoach window! No room in this country for supercilious travellers from across the water. We're casting off all influence from Europe, to lead our own life. Good-bye, Old World! Good-bye, aristocracy, all class distinctions!"

"And good-bye to culture, too," sneered Pentland.

"Culture!" replied Galloway, putting his feet on a chair. "There you go again, always ranting of culture. What the devil do we want of her sterile virtue, anyhow?"

"You apparently want nothing of it."

"Well, I don't want much. I had enough of it at mother's knee, and so has America."

"Brother," observed Mrs. Pentland firmly, "your enthusiasm is carrying you too far. Culture is indispensable. I won't defend an aristocracy that holds itself aloof from life,

but history and common observation combine to tell us that it is the upper classes which have always been the custodians of culture."

Galloway laughed shortly,

"Well, sis, you know more about history than I do, but I say this: a culture which is bound up with aristocracy must go. It's had its time; now to see it decay."

"You'll see that very speedily," muttered Pentland, nervously hitching his shoulders. "This backwoods fellow Jackson is the greatest disintegrating force of the times."

"Then hooray for him!" cried Galloway. "Disintegration? let it come! Confound it, it *must* come, for there's got to be tearing down before there can be building up."

"I doubt the building up, but the tearing down is perfectly apparent. Your America is casting off the very graces of civilization."

"Can't be helped. In the wilderness man has *got* to lose his decorations and flourishes. He must be bold, direct, slough off the chains of custom, likewise abandon and crush down the formality of the parlor, all of fashion's silliness, all fine arts and dainty affectations. Such things are only tinsel, academic niceties,

luxurious sweetmeats fit for pale girls and worn-out gentlemen,—there's nothing in it for young hot manly blood on plain and mountain. On the frontier manners are simple and natural and speech is justifiably rude. Bookish talk they choke off tight, without apology. *Amō amās, amat,* what's the good of all dead Latin? Let the eye turn from the printed page to the plough! Jerk the imagination away from dinner menus and put it to building roads! Idealism, I tell you, can express itself in practical as well as impractical ways, and there lies the forte of the American spirit!"

"That is a very interesting suggestion," said Mrs. Pentland quickly.

"Chaos!" cried her husband. "You're advocating chaos, Edward, a return to barbarism, a life without a single guiding principle. What plan is all this bred to?"

"Cursed if I know," chuckled Galloway, "but who cares? What do ye want a plan for? Life is life, that's all. It's change and growth this way and that, and the very fun of watching it lies in never knowing what's ahead. Man is the child of the earth! that's

what the West is discovering—with all kinds of experiment to follow. An end will evolve some time, somehow, some way . . . . . maybe! Meanwhile the mess is seething."

"A dangerous situation," growled Pentland.

But Galloway laughed and snapped his fingers at him,

"The grand and glorious West, ra la la la! where there is room to swing full stride! and fresh materials to work upon! where man is taught by the very earth under his feet to rely, not on musty antiquated models, no! by damn, but on his inner self! Thus does he become original and self-reliant, a thing straight standing, not a parasite, or a cripple either. Say! you two stick here if you like, stay in your old brick shell,—I'm for the times and for the West, though I must say I'd like it better if the old folks had left a little more. Travelling takes money."

Mrs. Pentland winced.

"Edward," said she, "you speak lightly."

"Do I? Well, I'm sorry and all that, but why mourn forever, sister? They've gone, passing through Nature to eternity, as some wag has it. Life! that's what I'm intent upon,

not death. I say, Pentie, what chance of a small loan to carry me on my way?"

"Any amount you like."

"Good! Well, sis, don't look so pained. What's up now?"

"Brother, you've changed."

"Pooh!" and he pulled out another cigar. "You only think so because you've been cooped up here with Pentie so long. The two of you are getting to be a pair of old women. I'll wager your children will be all girls."

"Brother!"

"By the way," he pursued, "how comes it you have no children of any sort or description?"

Pentland had risen,

"Edward, I really must ask you to confine yourself to the language of a gentleman when you are in the presence of my wife."

Galloway laughed,

"Well, well, I'm off to-morrow, so don't fuss. You folks are too much for me, and I seem to be too much for you."

III

To-morrow came, and Edward Galloway packed his scant belongings. In the afternoon they walked with him to the wharf, where he had engaged passage on a boat down the Ohio. Tossing his satchel over the rail of the vessel he kissed his sister and shook hands with Pentland,

"Well, here we are. Life is one parting after another, so we've got to get used to it. Don't cry, little sis. I'm a bad egg, but you'll be proud of me yet. Out West somewhere I'll get the world by the tail and twist it till it roars out praise for Edward Galloway."

She began to laugh through her tears, at which he pinched her cheek and went on,

"Meanwhile, don't forget the children. They say they're a great comfort; I don't know as to that, but the country needs new blood and new life, so get busy. Ha! there's the whistle! Well, good-bye, folks! Good-bye! Good-bye!"

He sprang up the gangplank, and as they stood waving their handkerchiefs to him, the vessel slipped away and down the river, gilded now by the setting sun.

With trembling lips Mrs. Pentland turned to her husband and silently took his arm. They walked slowly homeward through the twilight. . . . .

"Why so quiet, dear?" she murmured.

"I was thinking of his vulgar allusions. Perhaps you wish that . . . . . that. . . . . ."

"It would make me very happy," was her low and tremulous reply, "but God has not seen fit to bless us."

"*Bless* us?"

She turned to him with an imploring gesture,

"Oh Arthur! why is it that you have so little liking for children?"

"I hardly know. It must be because I cannot bear to think of any one else possessing even a part of your heart. If we had a child you would love me less."

"Silly boy, I should love you just as much as I do now—more, in fact."

"How could that be? If you had a child to care for, you would have to divide your love between us, and I'd be the loser."

"Not at all, for the greater the demands upon my heart, the more love it would gener-

ate. Love grows and grows, dear, in proportion as it's needed. There's no end to it. Don't you feel that way, too?"

"That's very strange mathematics," he parried. "I don't understand it, and I do not like it. I don't want a child. I want you all to myself. I could never share you with another. Don't be offended, Laura. Why, you can mother *me?* Won't that do?"

She put away her handkerchief and drew her lips into a smile.

"Of course it will," she whispered. "Of course, of course. Every man is something of a big boy to his wife, and when I. . . . . Yes, Arthur, you shall be both husband and son to me."

Pentland squeezed her hand,

"There! I'm content again. Oh Laura, you're everything to me, everything. Other people are so neutral and uninteresting; they irritate me when we are with them. I'm on tenterhooks until I have you all to myself again. I can't account for it in any other way than that you, and you alone, are necessary to my complete happiness. I'm glad Edward's gone, aren't you?"

"Certainly not . . . . . although it was best that he go."

"He was so upsetting. Did you notice how atrocious his accent had become? And the idea of sneering at the life I lead. He thought it quite absurd, apparently. But you don't, do you?"

For a moment she walked on in thoughtful silence, then answered firmly, gravely,

"Each of us must lead his own life . . . . . and each of us must bear the responsibility for it. It is impossible to make an adult over into another mould. That is why I am willing to see Edward go away, and that is why I am willing to see you stay here in Pittsburgh. It is my place to care for you, Arthur, and to affect your course by example and suggestion, but it is not my place to make your decisions for you. If in your mature judgment this is the kind of a life you wish to lead, that settles it."

"Well, it is. Your brother is welcome to his adventures among the barbarians; for my part, I prefer the amenities of civilization. Gracious! why do they make that noise?"

"It's the whistle at the ironworks," she

explained, "calling the night shift to work."

They had reached their own gate, but instead of passing on through, Pentland halted to turn and gaze back through the gathering dusk.

"Calling the night shift to work," he muttered. "Ah yes! calling them to bring more coal to build more flames and make more smoke, calling them to sweat and toil and dirty themselves and—"

"Let us go inside, since it irritates you."

"But it's all so disgusting! This thing called Industry is an octopus, and it's advancing upon us. Why, when I was a boy I used to think we lived a long way from the village, but now we have neighbors within a stone's throw."

"Won't you come in, dear?"

He seized the gate and swung it wide,

"Yes, Laura, I'll come in! Furthermore, I'll *stay* in."

IV

And he did. The days went by, the weeks went by, the months went by, and still he stayed indoors, content with his beloved and

all-sufficing wife, scarcely peeping through the windows at the town outside. He retired into his house and said it was his castle, etc. etc. Ah! how nice. And now for a comfortable chair, a foot rest, a head rest, now for the verses of Pope, which the queen of the castle reads aloud so charmingly—

"Gracious! why do they make that noise?"

"It's a mass meeting," she explained, and put the book aside. "Haven't you read about it in the papers?"

He had not. What kind of a mass meeting, to set up such a racket? Sounded as if the democrats were sacking the town.

"It's in front of Groot's saloon," said Mrs. Pentland. "A temperance meeting. The women are singing hymns."

What! Women in the street! Singing hymns in front of a saloon! Has the sex cast off its sense of decency altogether? Great Heaven, what next?

What next? A violent knock at the door: a hard-faced something-in-skirts to see Mr. Pentland, and will not be denied. Mr. Pentland comes, and the temperance worker goes. That's the end of that, thinks he, but—doesn't

Pentland know that martyrs *thrive* when wicked folks resist 'em? The temperance worker never comes back, oh very true, but she has a sister crusader, one battling for the right of man to be free of human bondage, and it is reported to her that the black servants up yonder in the brick house—for shame even to say it—they're slaves! Aha! grouchy aristocrat, clog on the wheels of progress, there's an abolitionist society in this place! We're whispering of your meanness—we approach—we knock—we hereby inform you that you are holding your slaves in defiance of the laws of Pennsyl—

He slammed the door, *factus homo* did, and they retired, but the Cause of Right has many weapons, as six days later Pentland learned: his negro gardener (the one who'd been so deft with pruning knife and spade) had run away, persuaded to it by the abolitionists. The master strode down town, to the office of the *Gazette*. He said something about an advertisement for the runaway. The editor shook his head; it was now his paper's policy not to help catch fugitive blacks.

"You're mad," growled Pentland. "Mad,

utterly mad! Beware of this folly, this movement to free the niggers—it'll lead to anarchy! Ha! you'll be advocating the suffrage for them next!"

The editor burst into a roar of laughter.

Pentland went home to tell his wife all about it.

V

"But we need that black scoundrel to care for the grounds."

"Now, Arthur dear, please. Of course it's too bad to lose him, but we can easily hire some one for the purpose."

"I'll not hire a black man! I'll not tolerate the airs these free niggers put on."

"Then a white man."

"A white man! Hire one of those apish foreigners! Why, Laura, they're asking a dollar a day for unskilled labor! I can remember when the same kind of work was done for fifty cents!"

"But we can afford it, can't we?"

"Certainly! I could afford to pay a man five dollars a day, but that's not the point. It

is the principle of the thing. Oh the whole situation is intolerable!"

She did not say a word to this, but Pentland found her silence eloquent,

"Laura!"

"Yes?"

"I realize that all this complaining doesn't enhance me in your eyes. I'm sorry, dear, believe me."

Again a little silence, and Pentland trembled. A hunted look came to his pale gray eyes,—they seemed to be two pools of restless and uncertain cloudiness, inchoate stuff from which gleamed hints of what was what.

"Oh I know I'm not what I ought to be!" he cried out, his chin no longer obstinate. "I know it, dear, I know it. What is it that makes me act so? Somehow I've lost the power to be enthusiastic, and what is worse I seem to hate all change, all adjustment, even growth. I disparage the present as a matter of course, and cling to the past with a grip I never knew I had. Why is it, Laura? Tell me, I beg of you."

"I do not know."

"But there's something wrong with me, else

I'd not fret and fume so. Can't you tell me what it is, darling? You are so wise; you have such understanding."

With calm brown steadfast eyes she gazed upon him, and in a little while, said gravely,

"I don't know where your trouble lies, Arthur, but since you press me, I'll answer as best I can. . . . . I suspect that your discontent is due to the fact that your love is not great enough."

"Why Laura! how can you say that? I adore you!"

"Ah! I'm afraid that is just it. You adore *me*, which is very wrong. I am nothing but a very imperfect human being, and while I am grateful for your affection, I wish you could send your love not only upon me, but beyond me, out into the world, to all things and to all living creatures."

He gazed at her with troubled eyes,

"I'm afraid you are dealing in vagaries."

Mrs. Pentland rose to her feet and walked thoughtfully across the room, to stand beside his chair.

"Perhaps I am," she said, with sober hesitation, "and yet the older I grow the more I

suspect that love in a broad and curiously impersonal sense is the source of understanding, and the source of true happiness, also. It seems to me that it might penetrate riddles which the intellect cannot solve, smooth away apparent contradictions, and bring clarity where there has been confusion. I wonder if this sort of love isn't a pair of spectacles which God offers us, in order that we may see things in their proper light, and hence move in harmony with Nature and our fellow men?"

"Now you are trying to convert me," and he shook his head disconsolately.

"Then I must say no more," she answered quickly. "Religion is a matter of private belief, not argument. Besides, my own ideas on the subject are still too indefinite for me to presume to preach. Each of us, you know, must work out his own problems largely by himself."

Suddenly Pentland buried his face in his hands, groaning,

"God help me, Laura, I don't understand it. The words are simple, but they have no meaning for me. They beat upon a closed door."

She touched his hair with her soft hand,
"Never mind . . . . . the door will open
. . . . . some day . . . . . some day."

VI

Some day, no doubt, no doubt, but not that day, nor yet that week nor month nor year. Curious about these closed doors, for one can never tell from looking at them if they are merely latched, or locked, and if the latter,—well, where's the key? Can it be that it is lost? If not, who's got it? Curious, too, that when one looks upon a door that's closed, one never knows what lies behind it: vacuum or turmoil, which? We never know, and sometimes just as we are thinking that nothing is going on inside, the thing bursts open and shows that very act to be, not a single and eruptive push, but the head and shoulders of a body long building up in secret. Bravo! there's a thought for you, an American thought, too, and if you think its joints a little loose, here's another:

Time has a way of passing! Let us reflect on that, and ponder this, also, that in some deep mysterious way one year is followed by

another! On this we'll base an argument, viz., that although there was a time when it was 1834, that year was pushed into the background by another, and that by still another, until all of the thirties went away, and the new young bright-faced forties came, and began to pass, passing swiftly for happy Laura Pentland, passing dully for her husband, but passing! passing for them both.

But enough of this! Not logic, but imagination, that's what we want, so fancy, now, a day of deep blue sky and gusty wind and great big dumpling clouds. They drift before the sun and throw sudden shadows down upon the earth, and then they move on and let the world bask in the warmth again,—more clouds will come along a little later. A restless day, a restless man, twisting in his chair. Hear him mutter,

"Won't you play for me, Laura?"

She rose and went to the harpischord,

"Well, Your Highness, what shall it be?"

A selection from Scarlatti.

Very well, and after that, at his request, a song from Handel, entitled

Ask if yon damask rose be fair.

This finished, she looked over toward him, and seeing that he was lying back in the chair with his eyes closed and his features relaxed, she stole from the room.

Quiet Pentland . . . . . presently his eyes opened. He half turned toward the window, murmuring,

"Is that you, Laura?"

No answer.

He jerked around and saw that he was alone. With a loud cry he sprang to his feet, trembling violently.

His wife came hurrying into the room,

"Arthur dear, what is the trouble?"

He embraced her desperately, his voice confused and infantile,

"Laura dearest! Oh how strange. . . . . Was I asleep or awake? I saw a shadow out of the corner of my eye. I thought it was you. I spoke, and it vanished. Strange. Laura, tell me, could a shadow be blond?"

She gazed at him, quizzical,

"Well, Arthur, I've heard of all sorts of shadows, but never of blond ones. They are usually black, you know. Or at least dark," she added with a smile.

"This one was blond," he muttered. "It moved toward me as if it were . . . . . a man . . . . . a large man, with broad shoulders. . . . . How very very strange. . . . . ."

"I'm sure it must have been a dream. Don't tremble so, Arthur. Sit down . . . . . that's a good boy."

"Stay with me! Don't leave me alone again."

Very well.

"Read to me," he pleaded. "Anything to keep me from thinking."

She walked to the bookshelves,

"What would you like? Something new?"

"No. I detest these young scribblers. Old books are best."

"An old book, then. What shall it be?"

He pondered, grumbled, couldn't say.

Mrs. Pentland shrugged her shoulders,

"Neither an old book nor a new one! Then what *shall* I read you? The newspaper?"

"Well," he answered heavily, "I suppose that is better than nothing."

Thus encouraged, she provided herself with a number of recent newspapers and sat down at his feet, leaning against his knees and read-

ing aloud snatches of things which she thought might interest him, thus:

"Oh listen! A new invention, called the daguerreotype, 'an expression of the photographic art, whereby a facsimile likeness of the human countenance, or other objects, may be transferred to a permanent record.' Wouldn't that be curious?"

"Just another fad. First it's mesmerism, then it's phrenology, and now this. Anything to take up the attention of the mob."

"I see by the paper," she continued bravely, "that Graham & Bolles are to have a larger store building. They're going to put in a complete supply of new writing materials."

"*New* writing materials, eh? I'd be grateful to them for some of the *old* ones! I went in there last month for some quills, and they hadn't any. Tried to make me buy those detestable newfangled steel pens. I wouldn't have them, of course."

"Here is an interesting account," she went on. "A race between a trotting horse and a steam railway train. They . . . . . they started . . . . . ."

At this point she was obliged to put down

the paper, explaining that her eyes had filled with water.

"Oh, your poor eyes!" murmured her husband, and bent over to kiss them with an impulsive tenderness. "Why have they been troubling you lately? Is anything wrong with them?"

"Nothing," she answered quietly, "except that Mother's trouble has appeared in me. But they are rested now,—perhaps I can read on."

"You shall not!" cried Pentland passionately, and took up the paper. "I am a selfish brute to let you strain your eyes. You listen; I'll read."

He did, reading calmly for half an hour, stroking her hair and asking in the boyish and affectionate way he sometimes had, how were her eyes,—but presently another cloud came drifting up, shut off the sunlight,

"My dear Laura, listen to this! Next autumn our fair city may have the honor—imagine—of entertaining the lady members —*lady* members, mind you—of a convention designed to plan and promote a Woman's Rights Movement! Did you ever hear of anything so ridiculous?"

Silence.

"And this!" he resumed. "Great Heaven, what is the world coming to? 'We are informed by the arbiters and dictators of fashion that the practice of eating with one's knife is no longer *de bon ton*, such maneuvering being, not only dangerous to the sides of the mouth, but also repugnant to the eye of the spectator, as well as out of accord with the mandates of good breeding.' "

With a growl he threw down the paper,

"Well, of all the ridiculous nonsense! Not good form to eat with one's knife? Why, I've eaten with my knife all my life, just as my mother did, and my grandfather, too, and every other person of breeding. And now these vulgar upstarts presume to tell me to change! I'll not do it, Laura. I say I'll not! Improper to eat with one's knife! O Heaven!"

VII

They say time is a cure for everything, but if the shadows marching round the sundial showed any change in Arthur Pentland, it was that it grew worse, not better. Fretful baffled man, he went on languishing in the old brick

house, wrapped in gloomy thoughts from which only his wife had the power to rouse him.

He went out very little: winter was too cold and wet, spring too rainy and muddy, summer too hot and dirty, autumn—gr-r-r, not so bad; and when his wife redoubled her efforts, and talked of a certain hill, and said it would be good exercise to climb it, he consented listlessly.

They set out . . . . . got to the top, and there Mrs. Pentland sank down to rest.

When her breath came back, she broke out gaily,

"Isn't this delightful? You used to pick wild flowers here when you were a boy, didn't you Arthur?"

"Yes, but where are the wild flowers now? There are none to be seen on Flare's Knob."

"Silly!" she laughed. "Did you expect wild flowers in October?"

"No, I didn't, but neither did I expect to see those ditches and ugly shanties down there."

She fell silent, while Pentland glared down the slope,

"Just look at that detestable smoke. Don't you find it outrageous?" and he turned to her in wonder.

"I don't find it pleasant, and yet I don't mind it so much the last few years. The curtains and the linen soil easily, but then they can be washed, you know."

"No doubt they can, but the sky can't, nor can the landscape. What a dirty, grimy, smoky place Pittsburgh is! Why, when I was a youngster I used to play up and down the bank of the river yonder, rolling in the grass and imitating the wild turkeys. But now just look! Look at the rubbish they've put there! Ashes, barrels, whiskey bottles! The fine old forest trees killed out—rats and human vermin prowling the waterfront—birds leaving, and I don't blame them. It's a wonder the very rocks aren't frightened off by this monster Industry!"

Mrs. Pentland was gazing down upon the city thoughtfully,

"Our industrial development has many unpleasant features—"

"It certainly has!"

"—and yet it has a promising side."

"The incessant multiplication of commodities, I suppose!"

She blew a bit of soot off his shoulder,

"I was thinking of something else. If Edward was right, and man is the child of the earth . . . . . then all this preoccupation with industry is serving to acquaint us with the conditions governing our spiritual as well as our social growth."

"Social growth!" growled Pentland, gnawing at his little black moustache. "Why, it is precisely industry and democracy, and all that sort of thing, which is destroying the cultivated classes. And Edward not only approved this destructive process, but actually sneered at culture in every form."

"He went too far. All impetuous, full-blooded people are apt to do that when they come in contact with a primitive environment, especially if it is unstable, too. Nevertheless, I am inclined to believe that much of his disregard for tradition is justified."

"What!"

"There are worse things than attacks upon social caste, and worse things than disrespect for custom."

He wanted to know what they were.

"Indifference to life is one," was her slow and hesitating answer. "If aristocracy and social exclusiveness lead to triviality they are bad, or at least so I am coming to feel. If they lead to sloth they are worse. Arthur, I've been thinking a great deal about this matter, and I can't help seeing promise in these toiling masses of humanity. They are alive, and valiant in their way. They're sincere, and eager, too, even though they deal in earthly things. They certainly have the capacity for growth and progress, which is more than can be said of many of the members of our own class. On the whole, it is perhaps just as well that the expansion of democratic life has destroyed the doctrine of the socially elect."

Pentland jerked around to stare at the calm but firm-lipped woman at his side. At last he found his tongue,

"Nonsense! Why, these people are cattle! They lack education, vision, culture, manners, breeding itself!"

"These things are not essential."

"Then what is essential?" he exploded.

"Love of life, and the inner spirit that fires man to grow and develop and climb up and up and ever upward, even though slowly and blindly."

"I can't see it!"

"Very well," she said, suddenly weary, "let's not talk about it. After all, it's not a matter for discussion, but for action, and by those who are younger than you and I. A new generation is coming along. We are about to pass into the audience to become mere spectators, while they stride on to the stage and take the active rôles. We're getting along in years, my dear."

"Eh?"

She bent a tender smile upon him,

"Of course. Time goes quickly, especially when one is happy. Why do you look at me like that, Arthur?"

Pentland, low and gravely,

"I hadn't thought about it . . . . . didn't realize the years were slipping away. I . . . . . I. . . . ."

"What is it, dear?" she asked, for he was gazing at her with widening eyes. "Surely you are not afraid to grow old?"

"Afraid!" he cried out in sudden startled triumph. "No! Great God in Heaven, I'm not afraid, either of old age or of death! Laura! there is no fear in me!"

He seized her by the arm and gripped her so hard she flinched, and as she drew back she saw that his face was shaking with relief and joy, and tears were trickling down his cheeks.

"I'm not afraid any more!" he panted. "How wonderful it is to be able to say that,—you'll never know. How could you know? How could anyone know, unless he had lived with fear ever since his birth—obsessed by it—never free from it—oh what a nightmare it used to be!"

"Arthur! Why have you never told me of this?"

Pentland broke into hysterical laughter,

"Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! I don't know! Ha ha ha ha ha!" He turned away from her, abruptly calm, "because . . . . . because it's natural for a person to conceal shameful things, I suppose."

"But these morbid obsessions are very tenacious. Are you quite sure that your fear

is gone away? I never dreamed it had a hold on you."

He kissed her hand and looked up earnestly,

"Quite sure, my darling. Please don't think me silly. I was startled when you spoke of our facing old age. You see, it used to be one of my chief terrors—growing old—but an instant after you spoke, I knew that what was once a horrible reality was now nothing but an empty sound. It has no more meaning for me, no more power over me. Without my knowing it, fear has left me, and I am free."

Again he kissed her hand and held it against his cheek, murmuring softly, speaking with a deep vibrating aspiration,

"Fear has left me, and I am free! I am content to face old age, my dearest. Content! oh more than that—I'm eager to grow old with you. I feel the strain of criticizing and condemning everything about me. I don't want to fight the changes that time must bring. I want to shelve it all, ignore it, take it calmly, as you do, Laura. Sweetheart, we'll go on through the years together, won't we? hand in hand, you and I together, together. . . . ."

VIII

Content to pass on down through middle life and yet . . . . . somehow the passing years bring him little peace. Round go the shadows of the sundial, up to the half century mark and beyond, but though he sits and reads *De Senectute* with well-bred smiles, he has no calmer view of life. He seems to be struggling with an unseen foe—a pair of horrors maybe, or three in one, or a single enemy with four branched heads,—at any rate there's some inner hidden demon-stuff that he is wrestling with. Wrestles and pants and trembles, and declares himself the victor and yet . . . . . the vanquished one continues to fret him—

"Gracious! why do they make that noise?"

"The city is celebrating its first railroad," said his wife. "Come dear, hand me my dark glasses and let's step on to the porch and listen."

He pressed his lips together but obeyed, guiding the stumbling woman out to the porch. She sank into a chair and murmured,

"It's a great day for Pittsburgh."

"I'm sure I can't enthuse over the railroad.

It seems to me the place is messy enough as it is. Why, they claim the population is over eighty thousand, imagine! People are pouring in upon us from every direction. Everything is industry, industry, industry! The uses of leisure are ignored. Everything is forgotten except the wretched object of this incessant hurry. Only yesterday I was jostled at our very gate by an uncouth foreign-looking fellow—"

He broke off to glare at a carriage passing along the street,

"Look at that! Just look at it! Show and vulgar display in the very harness of the horses. Apparently a rich man who won't let his neighbors forget it. What a madness this passion for wealth is getting to be! Ha! I was wrong when I said that democracy wants nothing of social classes, for having unseated the well-born, it's setting up money as a criterion. We'll soon have an aristocracy founded on coal and pork. I suppose this fellow is one of the forerunners."

Mrs. Pentland had shaded her eyes to study the passer-by, and now she spoke,

"That's Mr. Farnum. He lives two doors

from us. They are strangers here, from New York, and rather than being vulgar upstarts, as you insinuate, they come from a very old and well-established family. You are unjust, Arthur."

A flush of intense mortification spread over his face. He bit his lip,

"Forgive me, Laura. I was wrong to speak as I did. Truly, dear, I am sorry if I was unjust. No doubt they are very fine people, after all."

"The daughter is charming," said she, with a clearing brow. "We were chatting at the gate the other morning. I liked her very much."

"Did you, really?" contrition vanishing. "Then I suppose you are secretly wishing to invite her here to see you! Yes, why don't you? Do invite her!"

She reached for his hand,

"Why Arthur! how sweet of you! I'd be delighted, of course. . . . . But I thought you disliked young people?"

"I? Not at all, not at all! Have her, by all means, and let her bring all of her young friends, too. You have altogether too much

of me, I see that clearly. Do have them come, Laura. Really, I insist upon it!"

IX

She did have them come, making up little parties for them, asking them to the house informally, and loving it all. It was a happiness to sit and chat with her "new young friends," as she called them, discussing in her tolerant way the giant woes and giant tribulations that beset their paths. They gave her their halting confidences, and got back in return her mellow wisdom and her love, an exchange which they found delightful. Wasn't she charming? so full of fun, so genuinely interested in everything. What a happiness to be near her, reading to her from her favorite books, or talking of the latest scientific theories, or merely sitting at her feet, content.

Pentland? Well, he viewed it all with envy and astonishment. He struggled to make himself one of the party,—in vain, whereupon he thought to himself, how insufferable these young people are, their wit banal, their behavior coarse, their conversation tiresome

beyond belief! He tried to use them as a *factus homo* should, yet now and then he simply had to let out a savage flash, and this illumining the secret cavern of his inner man, they took as a warning to beware. They bore with him because he was the husband of their friend, but—what a queer man he was—nervous—always pacing to and fro—hating mirrors—offering material hospitality but small love, a man who seemed to study what to say, which, when it was said, turned out to be nothing but a calculated phrase, warming the occasion far less than did the spontaneity of his wife.

He longed for a chance to vent his spleen, —and found it. The evening had been warm and balmy, and it was late when they stepped out to the porch to tell their youthful guests good-night. The visitors went off down through the garden, passed out the gate, and disappeared in the darkness, laughing merrily. Pentland stiffened as he watched. He stood erect, his head thrown strongly back, the twisting of his features hidden by the black beard he now affected, even in the summer time,

"Laura, those girls haven't an escort. Doesn't that strike you as highly improper?"

"It would have been thought so in my youth," she answered, "but nowadays it is considered proper I believe, or at least not improper. The times are freer, you know. They are very nice girls, Arthur."

"No doubt, but hardly modest. That Stevens girl was dressed in frightful taste."

"Fashions change. It seems peculiar to us, but then we lack the viewpoint of the newer generation. They are no doubt right, and we wrong."

"Never! If I still have possession of my faculties, the young women of the day are immodest, unmannerly, and utterly vulgar. I am sorry, but I can't find anything agreeable to say about your friend, Miss Stevens."

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Mrs. Pentland with forced playfulness, "for she had several nice things to say about you. Why, she even said you look young enough to be my son! I was tremendously mortified," she laughed.

X

An hour later Arthur Pentland was in his chamber, pacing up and down in his night clothes, feverishly up and down, until with sudden resolution he left the room and slipped along the hall to his wife's apartment. Carefully he opened the door, went in. The room was full of moonlight. He crept up to the bed and knelt to gaze upon her: she was asleep.

Sleep! that curtain which as it draws its silent folds up over us, hides many things away and uncovers many more hid from our daylight sight,—and so with Laura Pentland. Calm gentle woman slumbering there so peacefully, to-night revealed in her what the waking hours had thus far kept back: the heralds of old age. Out over the pillow streamed her rich brown hair, and in it her husband saw a streak of silver, another and another. Her breathing was regular, quiet, strong, but in the features that he adored there was a curious flabbiness, a loss of fullness about the neck, a sagging. Subtle wrinkles creeping against the glory of her eyes, complexion fading, her skin robbed of the moist

lubricity of youth, a dry and papery skin exhaling a faint and subtle odor, a strange odor, imperceptible, yet—bend lower, Pentland.

Slyly bending over her he brought his black face closer. Black face? Black face, for if there was a pallor lurking in his features, it did not show: his tight thick beard lay upon him as a mask, a dark intense black curtain over which his pale eyes showed colorless as glass. He gazed upon her, sniffing suspiciously, and then he seemed to be convinced: his hairy lips fell open with a gasp, and she awoke,—not starting up with shrieking, not frightened, simply opening wide her eyes, calmly looking up, as if she'd known, before she woke, just who it was. She smiled, lifted a white hand to his trembling face,

"Lonely, dear?"

"Yes! May I come in with you?"

"Of course," and she made room for him.

He sprang into bed, seized her in his arms.

"What a boy you are," she murmured fondly.

He tensed a little,

"Don't say that. Don't call me a boy."

"Why not?" laughing faintly. "You are a boy, and you know you are, snuggling against me like this, until you 'most crowd me out of bed."

He made no answer, only hugged her tight, his lips against her breast, his breathing labored and irregular . . . . . it grew gentler. Sleep stole upon him . . . . . gradually his arms relaxed. She turned just a little: his hand fell from her, and he awoke and gave a cry.

"What is it, Arthur?"

"You got out of my arms. I want you close. I want you to sleep tight in my arms."

He was trembling.

"Arthur, what is troubling you?"

"Why . . . . . why . . . . . it is the noise from the street."

"I don't hear anything. I think it must be gone now."

"Laura."

"Yes?"

"Nothing can separate us, can it?"

"Separate us? What makes you say that?"

"I hardly know," he answered, in a halting

voice, "but sometimes I feel there is a barrier between us, a kind of invisible wall—like glass—which pushes us apart and makes me feel so queer . . . . . as if my feet were beating time, preparing to march. But it's nonsense," he added strongly, "nonsense, I say. I beg your pardon for bothering you when you're sleepy. Forget my foolish words."

She kissed him thickly, and drifted back to slumber, murmuring,

"Dear boy."

She slept, but he did not. Stiffly he lay there beside her, staring at the ceiling overhead,—and presently his eyes grew furtive, darting from side to side like hunted things. His lips were dry, his breathing so oppressed it seemed as if an invisible and tremendous weight had settled upon his breast. . . . .

He twitched and twitched . . . . . sat up. Stealthily he got out of bed. With careful steps he passed across the chamber, with cunning fingers he lit a candle. Holding it up to the looking glass he gazed at his reflection, staring long and searchingly, and as he stood there peering, pondering, there came into his eyes a creeping horror, horror and despair,

horror and despair and bitter sick acknowledgment.

"O God," he cried out hoarsely, "it's true, it's true! I can't doubt it any longer. He told me we were partners in a trick, but he lied! He slipped away and I'm left here to hold the sack alone! O you fiend, I curse you, Richard Bacon!"

Mrs. Pentland awoke with a start,

"Arthur! what is wrong? Why are you cursing Richard Bacon?"

He stumbled to her, muttering,

"I . . . . . I . . . . . I don't know, Laura, I don't know. I didn't know what I was saying."

She was blinking drowsily,

"Was it a nightmare?"

"Yes," he moaned, and sank into her arms, "yes, a nightmare."

Oh For A Charm Against The Fleshless One!

I

And now the sundial was marking the decay of Laura Pentland, clearly marking it, as slowly, steadily, the persistent shadows went round and round. Spring, summer, autumn and winter passed in fleet succession, swung round and came again, once more, again, again, till age, grown bolder with the years, no longer lurked in ambush, a sly foe full of hesitating stealth; it left off its mask: she who had once stood straight began to stoop a little, just a little, and she who in the long ago had walked with sprightly step was shuffling more and more: it seemed as though her feet were growing independent of her will.

Let us philosophize and say that life's a coin, and has two sides. I've shown you one, now see the other: good humor when exhaustion welled up more quickly than it used to, close-mouthed patience when in pain, serenity like a mantle of grace out of Heaven, and above all, this: a divine alchemy at work within her, making memory sweet and affec-

tions deeper and broader, smoothing over the raw thrusts of experience, and giving her the fortitude to bear the woe of dwindling sight. She bore it calmly, and when in showing Mrs. Carson to the door one evening she stumbled over a chair and almost fell, she said very simply,

"I'm afraid I'm getting awkward."

"Your candles are too dim," said the visitor. "You ought to outfit with these new gas lamps. They're wonderful, honestly."

Mrs. Pentland smiled,

"I've heard they're very nice, but we're fond of candles."

The caller halted on the threshold,

"Well, I have the rheumatiz pretty bad when it's wet, but as I says to Frank the other day, us watchin' you putterin' around the garden, it must be terrible not to see good."

"It is inconvenient," answered one who could not keep from wincing just a little, "but the evening of life brings its own lamps. One light goes, another comes,—it is the will of the Lord. I shall be content to lose my physical sight if my spiritual vision will only clarify."

"Good-night," snapped the visitor, and flounced out.

"Good-night, Mrs. Carson. I'm sorry."

She closed the door and went slowly back to the living room and settled into a chair.

Silence.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "I thought you were upstairs."

"I came down again when I heard Mrs. Carson at the door."

Silence.

"You are trembling, Arthur. What is it?"

She heard him draw in his breath with a hiss, and

"What is it? The toothache! I'm half crazy with it! Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!"

She blinked through her glasses at him, and when he had left off with his wild laughter, she said with troubled firmness,

"My dear, the longer I live with you the less I understand you. You seem to have always had a strange bent, but the last few years have intensified it until I hardly know what to think."

"Nonsense."

"Sometimes I feel that you have a secret

from me. Be frank, my dear. Tell me truly, is it your old obsession of Fear?"

"Fear?" he repeated, as if startled, surprised. "Fear?"

"Yes. You know that fear of old age and death used to haunt you. I've been wondering—"

He broke in with a harsh laugh,

"Don't wonder! As my dear dear mother used to say, the way to be happy is to think of happy things, and ignore all else. I have no fear of old age and death, none whatever. Why should I? I tell you it has gone from me completely."

"I'm glad. It is the hand of God."

"The hand of God!" his passionate voice whipped back at her. "I see no evidence of the hand of God in my life,—rather the hand of Satan."

His wife, troubled again,

"Now why do you say that?"

"Oh for no reason at all. Come, let's talk of something else. I insist. Tell me about old Mrs. Carson. What did she want?"

"Money."

"Money?"

"It seems that the churches want to hire a lecturer to defend the Bible against rationalism."

She heard him pacing up and down with nervous feet, but had no further words from him until he came back to the subject with an abrupt and falsified interest in his voice,

"Oh yes, yes. She wanted money, did she? Well, how much did you give her?"

"Not a cent."

"What! you didn't give her any money? Well, well, but . . . . . aren't you a perfectly good church member?"

"I belong to the church, but the older I grow the less I am inclined to insist upon all of the tenets of revealed religion."

Pentland intrigued, no longer needing to pretend,

"So you side with those who wish to make religion square with reason?"

"Not at all. I do consider it ridiculous and a waste of time to defend the literal interpretation of the Scriptures, since this affects not spirit but religious forms; however, I do not side with rationalism, since reason can never be more than a purblind guide in spiritual

matters. The whole argument is trivial and misleading, because it leaves the crux untouched and harps on what is not essential."

"Then what is essential?" and Pentland stopped short and turned to hear her answer.

"Love of life, and the inner spirit that fires man to grow and develop and climb up and ever upward, even though slowly and blindly."

"But this is treason to your inherited faith!"

She smiled wanly,

"If so, I fear I shall have to reorganize that faith, for the old doctrine of supernatural rewards and punishments no longer holds me. Arthur, I am coming to feel that the whole notion of the heavenly elect is ridiculous. I do not at all like the smug, self-righteous attitude which so many of our 'Christians' assume. It might be just as well if rationalism and science were to expand religious concepts to the point of breaking down the theory of the heavenly elect."

A bitter laugh from Pentland.

"A double movement!" he cried. "Democracy has destroyed the theory of the socially elect, and now the further expansion

of man's wonderful brain is to destroy the doctrine of the heavenly elect!"

Silence.

"That is a very interesting suggestion," said Mrs. Pentland slowly.

II

As a rule Pentland could not bear to be away from his wife, but there came a time when he craftily and persistently avoided her. If she were in the garden he stayed in the house, if she were upstairs he found some excuse to be downstairs, if he saw her stumbling along the hall to her favorite chair beside the fire he'd motion a servant to help her,—and take himself off. He avoided her, but though he sighed with relief when he was by himself, solitude brought him no peace, in fact it was when he was alone that restlessness came out upon him most strongly.

Alone in his room one day, he fell to pacing back and forth, now pausing to listen to his wife moving about below, now looking out the window as if expecting a visitor, but always going on with his nervous pacing back and forth, fingering his black beard, nervous

pacing back and forth, back—all at once he sat down at his desk, seized a pen and sheet of foolscap, and wrote,

"To clear up my thought I am going to—"

He stopped, gazed about, an agony of resolution in his gray eyes. At the farther end of the room stood a highboy. He went to it, opened a drawer, and took out a pistol. Click! it was loaded. Returning to the desk he sat down, placed the pistol at his elbow, scratched out what he had written, and began again, writing in a jerky bold hand,

"Unity and variety can exist together, but there must be concord among the elements which are various.

"A human body is a unity, but if a man has an aching tooth growing down out of the roof of his mouth, this destroys the unity of the entire body. The tooth is ridiculously out of place. It is of no use, either to the rest of the body or to itself. It ought to be drawn.

"Man himself is nothing but an anomalous tooth, if he is out of harmony with what would otherwise be concord. The theme of life, its setting, its many characters, their manifold activities, all this constitutes a unified pageant,

save for the man who grows down through the roof of it all as a tooth which is out of place.

"This human tooth ought to exercise intelligence. He ought to stop insisting that because he himself is nothing but a vessel of pain, all the variety about him is discord. Perhaps it is all concord, all unity, and he alone is the jar and jangle.

"This is true.

"Such a tooth must be drawn, partly in self-defence, partly in defence of the peace of the other actor in the human play. The sooner this is done the better, for whereas time helps the legitimate players to grow and mould themselves toward a firmer unity, the intrusiveness of the anomalous one can only become more pronounced and monstrous as time goes on.

"It may be necessary, therefore, for man to turn dentist."

Having written this he threw down the quill, took up the pistol, and rose to his feet. Resolution surged into his face,—but quickly fled again. With a sudden loud groan he began to pace the floor, shaking his head from side to side, his lips trembling. Again he looked

out the window: no one to be seen. A moan broke from him, and he was on the point of putting down the weapon when footsteps sounded outside the door. He heard his wife calling to him.

"Don't come in," he cried.

"Arthur, are you there?"

He clutched the pistol, screaming frantically,

"Stay back! Go 'way!"

The door opened and she came in, fumbling blindly, crying out in alarm,

"What is the matter?"

She saw him dimly, went toward him, seized his arm. At that moment there was an explosion.

"Arthur!" she shrieked, and threw her arms about his neck, "what have you done?"

The reply came slow and huskily,

"I fired . . . . . at a man. He was at the window—a thief—he was trying to break in."

"But my goodness," she gasped, and sank into a chair, "you mustn't do things like that. You frightened me half to death. You might

have killed him. Horrible! Why did you do it?"

Silence.

"Arthur! answer me!"

"Please don't ask questions. Don't fuss, Laura."

III

Round went the shadows of the sundial.

A coolness sprang up between them, but when she sadly called his attention to it, Pentland insisted that she was mistaken. He became very attentive, reading to her, adjusting her pillows, making pleasant little surprises for her, stroking her hair affectionately.

The passing days gradually took the worry out of her face. She grew calm, gently silent, sinking little by little into a long long revery, musing the weeks away, a wasting shrivelling little figure of a woman.

"Sometimes," she murmured, "I think old age is the most glorious of all stages of existence, don't you, Arthur? It is so much more serene than youth. The view is so much more clear. It is like pursuing a road which comes out upon a hill, where we can look back with

leisure and perspective, and weigh and judge experience as we never could when we were young. It is a calm and holy height that lets us look forward, too, enables us to sum up the past and use it as an aid in taking larger longer wider views of what lies ahead. And yet I wonder. . . . ."

Silence.

"I'm not satisfied, though," she went on, in a groping voice. "Dear, would you mind reading to me from the Second Book of Timothy? There's a passage I want very much to hear."

He got the Bible, opened it to the place she indicated, read,

"The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day—"

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "how often I've pored over those words. And how often they seemed to be a staff, given to help me on my way up the ascent of the Delectable Mountain, and on toward the Pearly Gates! And

yet this promise brings me no comfort now. A life of vanity in a vale of tears, to be followed by an infinity of celestial rapture if we are good, such is the creed of my earlier life. How unreal it seems to me lately, and how incongruous and bizarre the connection between this world and the heaven of orthodoxy!"

Silence.

"I wonder," she continued, "if we ought not to suspect our traditional religion of a false view? Perhaps I'm wrong, but . . . . . doesn't it degrade human life by failing to emphasize the values of this earthly world? If it does, it surely holds man back from his fullest development as a sentient human being. Whatever fixes our attention on heavenly joys and splendors certainly builds up in us a spiritual idea which is essentially weak and narrow. Narrow! that's the worst of it, Arthur. The heavenly elect, by their very fixation upon Paradise, shut themselves out of Heaven!"

"I don't understand you," said Pentland restlessly.

She smiled a little,

"Well, I don't blame you. I don't understand myself. The clarification which is taking place in me is also a confusion, if you know what I mean. Perhaps it's because tradition and custom build up unthinking habit, while the changes of our recent life breed a kind of chaos which attacks conformity in order to act as the forerunner of a new and better system. Do you understand me?"

"No."

"It seems complicated, I suppose. But perhaps it's very simple after all. Time will tell. At any rate, my fundamental notions of life and death are changing, and as they change they turn upon one another, like warriors in array of battle, an army of paradox and contradiction. I'm very weary, and yet the promise of heaven's peace seems such a sorry end to human life, a futile shameful end. This thing we call the death of the body puzzles me. My instinct tells me that life on the earth and life after death is of a single and unbroken piece, but . . . . . how can that be?"

IV

Confusion, then, was settling down upon

her, a cloud of doubt, a thick obscuring mist through which she struggled toward the distant light, seeking to know the way that she should go,—and so of that broad land America. Broad land in two great halves divided, first by geography, and after that by settlement and race, and later on by lack of understanding, by rancor, too, and by that goading itch of pride which leads to blood and tears, and graves packed close together.

Confusion, then, was settling down upon the land, a dark and threatening cloudy trouble, closer drifting closer, growing blacker, coming nearer, nearer still: it set the nation talking. Most of the wordy ones showed by their speech just where they lived, but there were those who sent up prayers for North and South alike; among these last was Laura Pentland.

When her husband read to her, she listened eagerly, drinking in the reports of a rude man's bout with the polished orator, exclaiming in wondering awe when autumn's election said the first was victor. The war cloud was closer now, darker, yet as it grew more dense and somber, news came piercing

it like shafts of lightning, news of him, simple man out of the West, one bearing in the name of "Honest Abe," the promise of a just and wise administration. He was to pass through Pittsburgh—in February—on his way to Washington—she must be there when the champion passed.

Pentland would have preferred to stay at home, and with this end in view he pointed out the extreme likelihood of stormy weather; she replied that stormy weather was very common, and that she'd seen a great deal of it, and lived through it. Said he, there would be enormous frightful tremendous crowds; said she, they had a carriage, and their old black servant George was a very careful driver. Most shameful argument he saved for the last, hinting that since she was now totally blind she could not see him even if she went; her reply to this was that she still had ears.

Round went the shadows of the sundial, and brought the day, a day of heavens overcast and drizzling rain beating coldly upon the earth, a supine and naked earth that had no comfort from above. Bad weather, but when she had been wrapped up warm in buf-

falo robes and lifted into the carriage, Laura Pentland felt quite comfortable.

They drove down town, halted before the Monongahela House. It was surrounded by a cheering mob. A silent figure stepped out upon the balcony, the cheers rang louder, and Mrs. Pentland wanted to know what he looked like. Looked like a boor, a tall uncouth fellow, said her husband, and then there was a hush, and Lincoln spoke.

When it was over, the carriage turned back toward the old brick house.

"Thank you, Arthur."

Silence.

"His voice is deep," she went on, "deep and grave and full of sorrow. He speaks like a man who is rich in understanding, and that is the chief thing in this time of trouble."

"They say he is a person of no education."

"Perhaps so,—judged by our standards, but I'm sure he has that love which is an aspiration toward the Right. This will guide him between mawkish sentimentalism on the one hand and inhumanity on the other. To me he represents that great life-force which is swamping privilege and blind tradition in

this vast fermenting land of ours, and—"

"I doubt if it averts the crisis."

"I shan't hold that against him. It may be for the best that we have war."

"A very strange thing to say!"

"Not at all! If we can't learn our lesson without the discipline of pain, then pain is necessary to our program. I look upon the present situation, not so much as a quarrel over states' rights and slavery, as proof of the inability of even free men to see themselves as brothers. Until they do, nothing of lasting good is to be hoped for. Men must be bound by the ties of spirit before there can be true progress."

Pentland turned to her with a bitter mouth,

"Then there will be no progress, for men are not so bound. Only the impersonal and selfish exigencies of life hold them together."

She patted his hand reprovingly,

"Superficially it would appear so, on the other hand the daily work of mankind seems to me a hint at a religious striving. After all, my dear, what is religion except a struggle for something higher? Surely Christianity holds no monopoly of spiritual values; surely other

faiths, and even the so-called irreligious groups, may also possess the Truth. Isn't your rude and profane laborer religious if he has love of life and the courage to mix with it? I for one will call him so if he ever so numbly recognizes the existence of the Ideal, and uses his transforming energy to move forward. I believe that young as this country is, its citizens are being welded together by their work, and that they are in the process of being moulded, one might say, into a spiritual relationship which is essentially that of equality."

"Ah! you are a democrat after all!"

"I am more than that. Political democracy, even social democracy, is only a fragment and a phase. The real goal I conceive to be the brotherhood of man upon the earth, and as we move toward that we must expand our view, casting off everything that keeps us from a just weight and measure of human values. Religious development must come from *us*, not from above, and it must ally itself with earth as well as heaven. Oh, Arthur!" and she clutched his arm, "how can the plan of God be formal, when spirit has no objects save in

the sense of purposes to fulfill? How can our ideal lie on beyond the grave, when it is obvious that our goal is mastery of the things of this present world? It's all so clear, and then in a flash it's all confused and contradictory. Why is it?"

"Come dear, we are home again. Let's get into the house as quickly as possible, out of this chilling rain."

V

In the days and weeks that followed, the blind woman spent most of her waking hours in her easy-chair, sitting quiet. Her senses seemed to be dulling under a kind of opiate which more and more shut out the world and coaxed her to withdraw within herself. A smile played on her lips; contemplation is very sweet when one is old, and she was old. She said her soul was fermenting, but though deep revery cut her off from much that moved about her, it came to pass that the nervous furtive restless pacing of her husband's feet made her uneasy. . . . .

"What is it, Arthur?"

She heard him halt abruptly.

"The toothache again!" he cried out harshly.

Mrs. Pentland frowned,

"Why do you always put me off with that pleasantry?"

She heard him gasp, heard him stammer desperately,

"I'd tell you, if I thought you. . . . ."

"Well?"

"Nothing. Just another pleasantry of mine."

Her face clouded,

"I'll say no more. It is clear that you do not wish to confide in me. I'm sorry, because there is something on your mind."

"Your birthday," said he, with sudden force. "I was thinking of a surprise for you, that's all. It comes next month, you know."

She was beaming now,

"Yes! I shall be sixty-eight. Time flies, doesn't it? Especially when one is happy."

VI

Round went the shadows of the sundial, softly and in silence round and round, and brought her the happiness of another birth-

day: scented notes and flowers and gifts without a name, and in the afternoon her young friends came, girls with caressing hands and youths who strove manfully to temper down what kept welling up in their eyes. They all sat round in front of her, like subjects before their queen, a tiny dainty queen, delicate and white, more flower than of the flesh, a just queen who turned her silvered head from side to side and smiled upon them all alike, showing forth benignity that knew no favorites.

"You're spoiling me with your kindness," she said. "My last birthday was nice, but this one is nicer still. Is this progressive? If so, I shall insist upon living forever, so that I may have thousands of birthdays, each one more delightful than the one before. Barbara," to a young girl who sat and stroked her hand, "I hereby commission you to discover a charm that will give me eternal life on earth! Science is your forte, you know!"

Laughter.

"Yes, let her try her teeth on that," grinned a youth, slyly yanking at the girl's hair. "She thinks science can do anything."

Laughter.

"I don't care!" protested serious Barbara. "Science can do wonderful things, and if certain boys I know would study it a little more seriously they might admit that some day—"

"Some day! Some day! She's the some-day girl, isn't she, Mrs. Pentland?"

The blind woman patted the girl's hand,

"They're only teasing you, dear. Some day perhaps we shall know how to prolong life indefinitely. Science is only in its infancy."

"Fancy our living on and on and on and on-n-n-n-n-n!" said Barbara, wide-eyed. "I should think it would be won-n-n-derful!"

"Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!" laughed Arthur Pentland from the doorway. "Won-n-n-derful! Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!"

Such glee from the black-bearded man whom they had forgotten! He wasn't such a bad sort after all! And so

"Ha ha ha ha ha!" they all laughed with him.

"Wonderful!" cried Pentland harshly. "You silly things, such presumption would draw down the most horrible punishment imaginable!"

He turned and left the room.

There was an embarrassed silence.

"Anyhow," murmured Barbara, "I hope I'm like Mrs. Pentland when I'm her age. She seems to have more life than any of us!"

"Perhaps I have!" smiled the blind woman. "The flesh grows weary, but the spirit needn't. When one grows old, you know, the physical world stops being a tyrant. Perhaps that is why I long to grapple with it again, to see if spirit isn't its master, not its slave."

"How could that be?"

"You'll see some day, I hope. Young people must be concerned with tangible things, but take care, take care! Long ago I had a brother, my dears, who said that idealism can express itself in practical ways. That's true, but there's a danger. You see, means may become the end, and if we forget the true end, we may build up a great body without a potent spirit. Too much concern with mechanical and solid things tempts us to lose faith in the unseen; it is so easy to fall a prey to materialism. The things we see about us, children, are vestment, nothing more. The substance lies within, and he who takes the dress for man himself, is duped. I am in the habit of

saying that I had a brother, and not that I have one, for it has been more than thirty years since I had word of him. I'm afraid that instead of his reducing the chaos of the West to order, the West turned him into a whirling fragment."

She fell silent, wearied by the talk and the gay excitement, and by the sorrows of remembrance,—and presently the young guests rose to go. Her husband led her to the door, and there she stood all flushed with gratitude that they had come, giving her hand to each youth passing out, receiving gently and in silence the reverent kiss each girl left upon her faded cheek,—and so she said farewell to them.

VII

She'd said farewell to those who had come to her birthday party, and now by subtle hint and sign there appeared in her the beginnings of a quite different kind of leave-taking. Life and death, what an inexplicable partnership these two maintain! How different, and how same! At odds, yet in Laura Pentland shading one into the other, with ease, as if by prearranged agreement. One by one the birthday

guests had gone; one by one the ties of earthly life were being sundered for her. Led by an unseen hand she passed, not to the door to say good-bye to youthful friends, but down the slope invisible, and toward a portal of another sort.

With dignity and with grace she went the way she knew she had to go, renouncing what she must, and glorying in the happiness of such small things as church bells from afar, and thrushes singing in the dawn. Sweet pungent spring and fragrant summer passed swiftly, and the sundial began to mark the days of autumn. The weather grew cooler and she kept indoors, preferring the fireside to the porch, because her feet chilled so easily now,—she had given up the out-of-doors too late: a cold settled in her chest.

"But it's nothing," she would smile, and press a thin hand against her breast, "nothing to worry you, Arthur. I'm sure I'll be rid of it by to-morrow."

The morrow found the cold still there, as did the next day, and the next and the next. January came and still her hacking cough clung on, though she laughed at it, and de-

lighted to remind the doctor that her lungs weren't giving her the slightest trouble. February showed its face and stayed a while and went away, and March appeared, a cold and blustery weather that whined about the house as winter's last attack. And through it all Laura Pentland sat snug and warm beside the fire, wondering—since her cold was better—why her husband was walking up and down so nervously.

"Arthur, you mustn't be anxious on my account. I feel quite all right, and when spring comes I'll certainly get back my strength. Tell me, is the snow off the ground?"

"No, except on the south side of the house."

"Oh splendid! that's where we planted crocuses, don't you remember? Do run out, dear, perhaps they are in bloom. They come very early."

She heard him leave the room . . . . . return: a single blossom came into her groping hand.

"A crocus," she whispered. "I knew it, Arthur, I knew it. What color is it, dear?"

"Lavender."

"Lavender! Oh how lovely! Lavender is such a charming color, and in the crocus it is particularly fine. How fresh it is, so crisp and cool, so full of new young life. It does me good just to feel it."

And so she murmured on, saying over and over again that the crocus was a wonderful thing, a precious gift from God, which like the leaf upon the tree and the bluebird in the sky, is meant to bring us joy. Chatting thus she passed a happy day, but toward evening there came upon her what she had learned to call a "bad spell." Bad, very bad, the cogs and avenues of her inner mind so twisted and gone askew that several times she had to halt and let her thoughts straighten out their kinks so that they could be said by lips. Once she waited so long that she flushed a little, murmuring,

"I can't recall the word just now, but never mind. It's of no importance. I've had a very gay . . . . . gay . . . . . just a moment. . . . . I've had a very gay . . . . . day! That's the word I've been looking for! I've had a very gay day! How strong the sun came through the window, didn't it, dear? It won't

be long now until it's warm enough for me to sit outside."

VIII

After that she talked of little else than spring, of that momentous day when she might leave the living room for a bold adventure to the porch. April came and went away, May brought its sunny weather,—the dawn of her last day on earth gave promise of the dry still warmth she had been waiting for. Her husband was afraid she'd take cold again, but she insisted. In silence he wrapped her up as if she were some fragile bit of china, and carried her to the porch, and there he placed her in an armchair made soft with cushions brought by old black George.

"Oh isn't it pleasant here!" she cried. "What a beautiful beautiful mystery that no matter how long the winter is, spring always returns. This is what I've been needing, dear. I can feel my strength come back with the warmth of the sun. With all these springtime odors in my nostrils I feel like my old self again. On a day like this, the shadow of the sundial must be very plain and black,

the light's so strong. . . . . Why are you trembling, Arthur?"

"Because my heart is curdling with despair! You are going to leave me, while I . . . . . I face a horror that is greater than death. I . . . . . "

"Perhaps not, dear. Perhaps I shan't leave you after all. My body is worn out, Arthur, but my spirit isn't. I've known for some time that life is slipping away from me, but on an invigorating day like this, all my longings turn back to earth. My soul is torn by two conflicting forces. I think I am on the verge of knowing what it's all about . . . . . at least I can say that I no longer look forward to immortality beyond the grave. The destiny of man lies here with man, I feel that very strongly. I feel, too, that orthodox theology rests upon a sense of our helplessness, our weakness in a world we do not understand. If we could understand it, I think we'd be glad to face about, give up our dream of Heaven, and accept the Earth."

Her face suddenly twisted into a knot, as if from the grip of an inner pain. She spoke with sharp and jerky effort,

"Why is it that with every forward step I am drawn back? I seem to see, and then I know I do not. I grope, but do not find. In this last hour I feel the force of my childhood training, as never in my life before. It comes back upon me as summation of my circle, to wrench away all the conclusions I've been striving for. O Christ, have they so little root? I'm held fast by one and beckoned by another. What about immortality? An ethical existence is impossible without the premise of eternal life. But how reconcile immortality with man's destiny upon the earth? I'm afraid I've gone too far. I'm afraid for our religion. It must change. It must adjust itself, but if it goes too far it will end in chaos, as Brother's spirit did. O Edward! Edward! where are you, Little Brother? Christ have mercy on me—show me the way."

She swayed from side to side, blind groping Laura Pentland, weakly panting, clinging to the hand of one who stood erect beside her chair and wept in deep despairing silence,—but presently she had some ease: pain fled out of her features, serenity came back. An

aggressive urge cut in against her confusion,

"I've got to know . . . . . is our vague appetite for another life only a hidden wish for eternal activity here on earth . . . . . where change gives opportunity for endless progress. Perhaps . . . . . if some unifying thread be found . . . . . some common faith to bind men to the invisible . . . . . and to each other. . . . . Humanity must move toward brotherhood. How much nobler such an ideal than our weak insipid dream of Paradise! Not Heaven's bliss, but America a century from now, two centuries, that's what I'd like to see, if I had the chance. How wonderful to live that long, to see confusion turn to clearness, to test out what I surmise. But my mind is wandering. To see this and to share in it, one would have to have a charm against the Fleshless One and be deathless, a man who could not die!"

"Great God!" cried Pentland, falling to his knees before her, "you have my secret at last! Pity me, Laura, pity me! for I am destined to live on beyond you!"

The face of the blind woman had become radiant with an ineffable ecstasy, descending

like a holy veil, blurring her perception of the world she was leaving. With a sublime smile she leaned back in her chair, and placed her hand upon the head of Arthur Pentland, her voice coming to him as from some far-off distant place, prophetic,

"I am dying, Arthur. You are going to live on beyond me, dear. I am not afraid, but I almost envy you, you who survive me, continuing in the world where all that has been dark to me must drift away before the light. Do not be dismayed by my confusions. Let what you have seen cause you to trust your Maker for what you have not yet seen. Believe in the goodness of life, although earthly happiness be impossible. Be brave against the adversities of time. Fulfill your destiny, I charge you. Struggle to reconcile the things of matter and the things of spirit, for Heaven and Earth must be made one. . . . . I have done what I could, and now we part. From here on you go alone, until a greater love becomes your staff. Don't weep, please. . . . . Oh! it is sweet to die like this . . . . . precious our long years . . . . . let memory of them give you courage . . . . . I . . . . . I am

content . . . . . though somehow . . . . . somehow troubled . . . . . troubled . . . . . ah . . . . . too late, too late . . . . . it's too late to know . . . . . good-bye, my dear. Thank you for the happy life you've given me, and for all your kindness . . . . . and devotion . . . . . thank you . . . . . and now may the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ rest upon you forever and ever."

Wanderer

I

. . . . . long days of fretful argument, days of hope and panic and despair and hope again, then confirmation of the good glad news. Good news! Glad news! The war is over! Thank God there'll never be another! Hooray, and now for out of this stinking pen, and off for home! Hooray, hooray! Stand back, you double-damned and triple-accursed rebels, stand back! or else you'll get a gob of northern spit right in the eye, or maybe a broken nose—we're Yanks. We've licked ye, ye blankety blanks and dashed dashes, and now good-bye! good-bye!

So be it, then, ye double-damned and triple-accursed Yanks, good-bye! good-bye! Go and be damned! Away, you imitation soldiers, and come no more! All out! Empty the stockade! Turn 'em loose! All right, they're gone—no, there's one who lingers, the blankety blank, he must be deaf. Hey there, what's-you-name, you Private Arthur Pentland, you wus a prisoner, but now yer free, so git the

hell from here. Go home to yer wife and babies, feel their caresses, taste their happy tears, and tell the trembling and expanding tale of the mighty battles you won all by yerself, with one hand tied behind yer back. What! still here? Move on!

Moved on, a fragment in the northward-stumbling line, going with mechanical feet, a dull creature walking as in a daze,—and one by one his comrades dropped away from him, one off to the right in answer to the call of shaky old mother, one to the left to wife and the toddler become a gawky girl, one here, one there, until in time Pentland was alone, a single solitary figure marching north against the twilight, his head bowed in thought, thought which bears its fruit at last. Halt! He draws his army pistol from his pocket, presses it against his temple, and pulls the trigger: the weapon misses fire.

With a cry he throws it to the ground, and as he stands there his face seems to wither and to die, then as from an inner, far-away, and distant prompting, he goes upon his way, on and on and on, how long thus striding no man can say, save one.

II

. . . . . a wanderer in a chaos, a bit of human life adrift in pandemonium, treading a land laid low by war, and prostrate, now, in sickish dream. Through smoking ruins he pursued his way, through what had once been streets of what had once been towns, seeing, whichever way he looked, wreck, ruin, starvation. He saw the havoc wrought by man: the rich made poor, the poor turned into beggars, and all of them reduced to black distress. Proud ladies left with only a cow they knew not how to milk, barns in ashes, abandoned fields, the ground soaked with blood, dead horses rotting in the sun, and buzzards circling high against the blue.

Buzzards on earth as it is in heaven, a motley snarling thieving crew, nameless desperadoes, and some with names that once laid claim to honor—but not now. Carpetbaggers swarming upon the exhausted south, the lanes dusty with the bare but eager feet of niggers scampering toward the myth of freedom, refugees so weakened by their private woes that they were tempted: they snatched a cap from the wailing orphan looking for papa, beat

crippled soldier over the head, and gave the widow something rudely masculine to think about,—all this saw Pentland, as he moved through the ravaged land, disconsolate.

North and steadily north, and presently he heard, above the wailing and the weeping and the cries of bitter hatred, another sound: the racket of pleasure-seekers, celebrating the close of this last war in all American history. He saw luxury, men gambling and racing horses, boys spilling liquor down their throats, and the gentler sex pursuing what looked to him like vice, unbridled lust. Wide-eyed he gazed upon these women, these ones bedecked with scintillating jewels, with powdered painted raddled cheeks like whores, these brazen creatures of the sex of his own sacred pair, divine and holy Laura and his mother,—why! these about him were courtesans! Just see those hoop skirts flaring! high heels! gaudy petticoats! frizzled hair hanging down behind, hair false as the hearts within. They held no lure for him, being but a feather in his throat as he strode through the gantlet of their smirking and their cooing.

And yet as he passed on by and left them,

his dull lethargic mind began to grope, and groped until it fell upon an ancient memory; in the sickness of his heart it seems to him to be reality. Reality come back, and mad dream go! I wake! pronounce the name of home! O labyrinthine America! immense unfriendly land, there is a spot far far from here, where in a wooded valley two clear and limpid streams flow into one, a spot that's sweet with peace, a little town packed tight with dear ecstatic memories! it rises up before me, Pittsburgh! O Pittsburgh, I am coming back to you, back home to childhood scenes, back to the old brick house and sacred graves there in the garden by the lilac bush, two graves that somehow must be three, and then there'll be some ease for my restless weary troubled foot.

So thinking in the fog and muddled strain of what we'll call his mind, he said some words and paid some money and climbed into a carriage. The wheels went round and round, and Pentland fell to brooding on the glories of the long ago. Deeper and deeper into revery he sank, till all at once it seemed the carriage had halted on a hill, and when he looked about he saw a sea of vapour, a vast and billowing sea

of stuff pierced here and there by flame, smoke hiding the tortured creatures that groaned and screamed their anguish in its bowels. He seized the driver by the arm and said he wanted to go to Pittsburgh, not to Hell, and the driver answered that this, although it looked like Hell, was Pittsburgh.

Pentland gaped and trembled, staring, gawking, puzzling. Numbly he climbed out of the carriage, gazing down into that seething mess of soot and grime and smoke and noise, Pittsburgh! Childhood home, land of his boyish dreams, surrounded by the wooded hills, under the sky so blue, Pittsburgh! Welcome! Pentland, welcome home!

A long long time he stood there, then slowly he descended, shrinking back at every step as from the pit of Hell, yet since all damned souls must go on, he never halted. Went on and on, finding his stumbling way through the maze of unfamiliar streets, flanked round by smug pretentious buildings and by a press of people so strange to him, and yet they seemed at ease in this, his childhood home. He turned, bewildered, confused, a bearded stranger in the old familiar village.

"Where is the Pentland estate?" he asked a passer-by.

"No spik Englees," said the man, and hurried on.

"Where is the Pentland estate?" he asked a passer-by.

"Never heard of it," said the man, and hurried on.

Never heard of it! Well, of all the ridiculous nonsense! Never heard of the old brick mansion built by Henry Morton at the close of the Revolution! But it was there, oh yes! it was, and when with dragging foot and straining eye he turned a certain corner, he saw it, there in the center of the block he owned. Right in its place, and yet it seemed out of place, for while he'd been away the open stretches on either side had been taken over for tenements and factories, by bustling hustling tussling people, his neighbors.

Slowly he opened the rusty gate and passed into the garden, a place of death, for the trees were withering from the clutch of smoke and soot—the grass was black—flowers all gone. Dully he gazed about, and paused: before him stood a tarnished lilac bush, a grim and black-

ened sundial, two graves. He took off his hat, and bowed his head and jerked it up again, for the faces of curious strangers were staring at him from the street, left, right, and out in front.

On up the path he dragged himself, over the old brick walk grown up with grass, up the creaky steps, and into the stale damp house. Overpowered by memory he sank into a chair, and gave a little moan, and then he gave a little gasp, for a sound had come to him from somewhere, a shuffling scrape of a tread, drawing nearer. Up sprang the wanderer and backed against the wall, terror in his pale pale eyes, till in the wan dim light, there in the doorway, he saw the figure of an aged black man, halt and lame and full of quavers, his kinky old head grizzled with silver. He bowed respectfully, and raised his creaky voice,

"Welcome, Masteh. George wait fo' yo' a long long time."

Pentland slumped into a chair, muttering, "Begone."

"Masteh Ahthuh, Ah wants to stay wid yo'."

"Begone!" cried Pentland. "You are free. It is I who am in bondage."

"Masteh!"

"Begone!"

III

And so he came back home to Pittsburgh, pleasant vale no longer, village no more, nor town—it was a city, a swelling frog set on exceeding the ox.

He shut himself up in the house, but though he closed the doors and closed the windows, the soot came in and the smoke came in and the noise came in. The door bell had rusted dumb, but see! fretting Mahomet has visitors: boys delivering circulars, agents with bargains in books and corsets, and presently a woman tapping at the window,—she was willing to rent the quaint old place. Such was her first idea, her second was to flee from the dishevveled spirit she'd raised, thus giving place to one who was bolder, a man with a diamond horseshoe in his tie and a black cigar in his face,

"Good morning, fine, lovely, very nice. Say! Mr. Pentland, 's nice place ye got here,

very. Good location for our new steel mill. Jones & McCormick's my firm. Biggest in the city. Glad to know ye. Well, what's your price?"

Not for sale.

"Tut tut, quite so, and all of that, but say! everybody's got their price. Old residences bound to go. Too bad, but this is the manufacturing section of the future. City growing every day. The figures speak for themselves. Steel rails and rolling mills and nails, aha! don't forget the nails! Eh?"

Slam went the door.

Round went the shadows of the sundial, marching round and round, a pointless march save that it pushed an ever-growing misery into the bearded face of Arthur Pentland. Time! it was a precious gift that he had grown to hate, despise, and once as he stood in the garden mourning beside his pair of graves, he muttered in his wretchedness,

"Myth, myth, that's your immortality. Nothing but dust . . . . . both ashes. And what a blessing, for you . . . . . free of all the torments of passing time. Poor Laura, your prophecy of future light was only a dying

fancy. I'm glad you cannot see how much you were mistaken. Yes, you are at rest, but I am not. Every detail of everything transpiring imprints itself upon my brain, as clear and sharp as a steel engraving. Moment by moment my recollection is piling up, a burden ever greater and greater, a mass that pushes into the foreground of my consciousness despite all efforts to keep it back. My memory of the past! O Christ, how it follows me every instant, palpitating within this cursed head of mine, pressing down upon my very soul. Mother! Laura! it is unbearable! I—"

Brisk footsteps made him break off: he turned to find a smiling round-faced little man who simply must shake his hand and shake it and shake it, for this was the Secretary of the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce,

"Your letter received yesterday. I came at once. My dear dear sir, surely you do not object to smoke! Why, we must teach our boys and girls to be proud of our name *The Smoky City*, for smoke is a symptom of prosperity. We are now the center of the largest manufacturing district for steel and iron in the world, also for coal and coke, white lead

and pickles, tin plate and air brakes. Our population is well over a quarter of a million, think of it! And smoke is symbol of all this! Moreover, my dear dear sir, we'd be unhealthy without our smoke, for it is antimiasmatic, preventing tuberculosis, asthma, goitre, dropsy, pneumonia, and other diseases too numerous to mention. Be grateful that you live in Pittsburgh, sir, be grateful. Here, take these pamphlets and read 'em. Get acquainted with Greater Pittsburgh and Her Future."

"But—"

"Tut tut, quite so, and all of that, but say! never mind apologizing. As one of our most esteemed citizens, etc. Pittsburgh is a great city, let us be greater. Chicago, pooh. New York, two poohs. Pittsburgh, I tell ye, that's the place. Combines more geographical advantages than any city in the United States. Lies in the very heart of the bituminous coal formation of the Appalachians. The very heart of the natural gas region, think of it! By river transport we have direct access to the very heart of eighteen of the finest states in the Union. Salubrious climate, low mor-

tality, lovely spot to raise a family. Are you married?"

IV

Queer chap, this Pentland! A home-loving fellow they say, but somehow never satisfied. The seventies ruined this one and that one and those over there, but it only made him richer, —old Morton was shrewd to put his money in land. Pentland is rich! opulent beyond the dreams of avarice, as some wag has put it, and yet he's groaning and moaning like one possessed of devils. Come! Pentland, tell us why this restlessness, this walking striding pacing, this harassed look, this black dishevelled head, isn't this home to you? You have your house, your four walls where you are king, your candles and the open fire, and then there's the harpsichord, you know, with a selection from Scarlatti, and a song from Handel, entitled—gracious! why do they make that noise?

It *is* a noise, is it not? It is, I quite agree. A din, a clatter and a racket, a yelling pounding whistling screaming never before heard this side of Hell. Hooray, it's a celebration!

The sundial's brought us 1890, a wondrous year for Pittsburgh, for this is the anniversary of such prodigious and stupendous growth, I swear it sounds like a fairy tale. From naked waste to blooming rose, behold our Pittsburgh! Mightier than ever, without a parallel, no rivals she. Brain brawn and boosting done it, gents, and pig iron too deserves a word. Hooray! we're four hundred thousand strong, and that's a half a million, almost. Annually producing, ladies and gentlemen, eight million feet of plate glass, and that's almost ten million, ain't it? Hooray for us and you and me, and say! don't you forget the smoke, the anti-miasmatic, anti-asthmatic, anti-tubercular, life-giving, and soul-purging smoke! Hooray!

All Pittsburgh is hooraying, save Pentland, and he is groaning. Shame on you, Pentland, why don't you git out and boost your home town? He makes no answer, only moans and holds his head, oh he is so unhappy. Maybe he has the toothache again, for now he leaves the house and sets out for a doctor. Down the street he goes, and what a jargon! This squeaking, growling, grunting, this gargling

whining monkey chatter, is this English? Is this Pittsburgh? Is this America? Whence come these strange peculiar ones, these ugly faces, these fierce whiskers and squat brows, these sniffling ones without a handkerchief, oh how revolting! No *factus homo* here save Pentland, but only smelly animals, oh how disgusting! People from the ends of the earth, brought here just to affront him, Pentland the aristocrat, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them crowding close to him, these Slavs and dirty Greeks, Italians, Israelites and Finns, Germans, noisy Irish, wild and hairy Russians! Four races, did you say? Why! there are forty—but here's the doctor's office.

"H'm, I congratulate you," says the doctor. "Sound as a dollar. Organs working as nicely as a bicycle factory. Great invention, this new-fangled thing they call the bicycle. Yes, good investment for an insurance company, I'd call you. Sound as a dollar."

Out of the doctor's office he strides, and goes back home, and still they're celebrating, for now that we are great, we must be greater. The past is only a beginning, now watch us

grow. Pittsburgh! greatest of them all, a giant among pigmies, and don't forget the salubrious atmosphere! Come, everyone who's got a voice, let's beller out several dozen modest little prophecies! and then out with your flags and we'll parade!

A parade it is, and Pentland, too, parades, pacing up and down his room, his hands against his ears, and muttering to himself. Tut tut, you're talking wildly, aren't you, Pentland? Well, if you are, be careful, sir, for gentlemen are most careful of their diction. But wait! he can no longer speak. His lips are twitching, perhaps he's ill. Feeling indisposed, dear Arthur? Then go to bed, and Mother will take care for you. Dear, dear Arthur, how she loves you, how tenderly she'll nurse you, yes, suckle you, poor timid infant who must be guarded against the impacts of the unfriendly world. Crawl in beside her, and thus escape from life. Return within herself! Shrivel back into the womb!

But sh-h-h-h-h! leave off this banter! His face is wrinkling up; he is a baby after all—he's going to cry. Weep, then, Arthur dear, for that is what all babies do, and you're a

baby. A baby, yes! for though there's manly growth ahead of you, you're still in diapers! Manly growth to come, and so begone! as once upon a time you said to old Black George. Be off! Take one last look at the old brick house, this shell, this protecting rind within which you might have coaxed yourself toward growth—might have, but didn't. You chose to decay, that's why you're stirred out now, on to a wider stage. Begone!

V

And so he said farewell to Pittsburgh, and fell to wandering up and down the land, finding many Pittsburghs called by other names. He stayed a week in Kansas City—we are dirty, let us be dirtier. In Albany it was watch us grow, in New York he mustn't forget this was *the* metropolis. Then Boston, modest little place. Cleveland unparalleled and Milwaukee without a rival. Buffalo, too, deserves a word, and as for Detroit, her figures speak for themselves. Opportunities on every corner of Savannah, and some in alleys, too. New Orleans is queen of the South, Denver pride of the West! St. Louis and Seattle,

Tacoma and Frisco, Cincinnati, Atlanta, Oshkosh! a dozen more, a hundred more, hooray for us and me and I.

Dirty sweaty vulgar places Pentland thought them, and fled away and came to more just like them, the whole an incongruous medley of men and things and ideas, shaping itself, and moulding Pentland, too, even as he fled. He left here and went there, discovering, thus, a fundamental law of physics, which says that if a bit of matter is not in one place, it must be in another. That law he tested, tried, and proved, and acted as if he hadn't. There was no harbor for the boat he steered, and so he drifted on, half swamped by the sea America, groaning from the buffet of her wind and storm, yet limping on and on, a tattered sail against the sky. He boxed the compass round, North by East, and South again,—into the cul-de-sac of Florida, where in a little park one day he saw an ancient derelict, another, three four five, established on their favorite benches, taking the balmy air.

Old men talking creakily, murmuring over and over again how nice and warm the sun was. With glazing eyes they blinked upon the world

all tumbling down about their ears, and asked the news of such a one, and them blasted kidneys of his. They spoke of the troubles of upper plate when bread is hard, and told of the queerness of these crazy damned things, these automobiles, rushin' hurly burly pell mell and topsy upside down before their eyes, b'god there ought to be a law agin 'em! And then they fell, as ancient ones are wont to do, upon the glories of the olden time. Great splendid memories these, with ugly cracks chinked up by failing recollection, memories laced with sorrow and bitterness,—smoothed over now, however, varnished, made immaculate.

"Aye, them was the days."

"That they wus."

"A fine appearin' man he wus, too, wus Robert E. Lee."

"I rec'lect him well, I do."

"Shucks, I 'member his father, you striplin's, you."

"And I, I remember further back than any of you, for I recall the bells they rang when Jackson took the oath of office. I lived in Pittsburgh at the time."

The hoary crew turned their bleary eyes upon the stranger sitting near.

"Eh? Why, that's more'n seventy year ago! You can't remember that!"

"I can!" protested Pentland with a shaking mouth. "It's true, I swear it is! I remember further back than that, too. I recall the day that Washington retired from office. It was in 1797."

At this they stared with all their might upon the brazen one, who spoke of things that could not be. 1797, eh? And this is 1902! That's danged near a century, ain't it? He claims it for his memory, but hell! the more we peer at him, the more he looks like a youngish chap, with beard as black as coal, not a thread o' silver in't.

"It's true!" cried Pentland desperately. "My friends, I am a wanderer such as Cain, not cursed as he was, but sent adrift by my own folly. I was born in 1781."

An old man fumbled for his cane, got slowly to his feet, and Pentland burst out frantically,

"Sit down and listen, for the love of God! I'm going mad from pent-up woe! I've got to

talk. Listen while I tell you how I became a parasite first to my mother, then to my wife, until the hand of Fate wrenched me from the host and threw me lonely and solitary into the Maelstrom. I—"

A second old man rose up to go, and Pentland cried out imploringly,

"Don't go, oh please don't go! Don't stare! don't shake your heads! Let's talk, so I'll forget myself. I've decided that it's talk that rules the world. Men are only the pawns of Idea. Do you think the universe is founded on a plan? I deny that it is, but—don't go! I'm shrivelling up for lack of friendliness! Don't go, oh for the love of gentle Christ, don't go!"

One by one the old men got to their feet: it's dangerous to linger in the nearness of a madman, for all at once, b'god, a tooth could flash right out and rend ye! Madman is bad, liar is bad, the combination is a double plague, and so away! Sticks putter over the ground, exploring the toilsome way for shaky feet to follow, hobble hobble and shuffle shuffle, off across the park to other benches under a gently-sighing palm, safe from the menace of the queer one.

The queer one was left alone, there in the sunshine bright and warm a little while ago, but now a pale wan flood lacking heat, lacking hope. He groans, and feels a little better, and in the ecstasy of his misery he finds the strength to lift his head and glower upon the wobbly ones across the park. Fools! oh why do they pick on Arthur Pentland? Yes, why? Tell Mama on them, Arthur dear, for you have a right to the friendship of the aged, a right, I say, bestowed by whoever hangs rights upon our Christmas Tree. You were a man when they were puling infants,—why can't you prove it? Go to a doctor and get him to give you a hint of some disease, some recommending weakness to show these ancient ones, and thus win back their confidence. That is a very interesting suggestion, said Pentland quickly.

"H'm, I congratulate you," said the doctor. "Sound as a dollar. Organs working as nicely as an automobile factory. Great invention, this new-fangled thing they call the automobile. Yes, good investment for an insurance company, I'd call you. Sound as a dollar."

"But I'm restless! I—"

"Imagination! Imagination! Lots of it nowadays. Kind of a fad. First mesmerism, and then phrenology, and now imagination. Take some calomel."

"But I tell you I'm irritable. I can't seem to get in step with life."

"Imagination, I tell you, imagination! You'll outgrow it. Used to be bothered with it m'self, but golf and my wife took it out of me. You're all right. Sound as a dollar. Good-bye!"

VI

Sound as a dollar and good-bye, out of the doctor's office and away, striding, stalking wearily, sick from the woe of life, wishing praying hoping, longing for escape out of this world of pain, cursing the name of God, for if there were a God, why he would take me from this intolerable—

—a roar, a rush, a crash, and Pentland felt himself hurled to the ground, his brain torn loose from sense, his body crushed, destroyed. Dizziness succeeded to this rude shock. . . . . He sank away to soft gray nothingness, luxurious impotence, far from the madding

world, swooning to the land that lies beyond this life on earth, and with the shred of mind still left to him he yielded up a prayer of thanks, that God had answered him, and this was Death.

Death! death with its eternity so different from the one he had known,—how sweet this was, this blissful drifting out into space on soft soft clouds, no struggle, no pain, no bitter memories, oh how delightful! Serenity and peace and calm content at last, all for him, in everlasting abundance, yet presently he felt a tiny sting, another and another, and after that a million sharp prickly slashes, a tingling jangling soreness, dartings of pain through feet and legs, with dizzy cloudinesses pressing down upon his brain, a burden surging and heaving in sickly vomit, as slowly he came pulsing drifting back to earth: a crowd stood around him; he heard the crash of voices,

"Lucky for you."

"Street car hit you."

"Narrow escape, I'd call it."

With a moan he tried to sink back, but something held him to a sitting posture. Dully he turned his eyes, and saw that an arm was

supporting him, a great powerful manly arm, clothed in tweed. He jerked about to see whose arm it was, and swooned away, and when he came drifting back to earth again, the arm had gone.

"Lucky for you."

"Street car hit you."

"Narrow escape, I'd call it."

Pentland burst into tears; the people began to cluck their sympathy.

"He's scared," said some one.

He got to his feet, pushed through the staring circle, and strode away without a word.

"Wretch!" screamed some one, "not even to thank folks for savin' his life!"

It was a strong voice, but the wretch never turned. He only went on along the road, the road that led to Creepie.

VII

It was a day knee-deep in June—thus all love stories should begin—and Pentland had been trudging along the road since dawn. Over hill and dale he went, through a little valley and just beyond, and heard the happy shouts

of human beings and the howling of a beast, —the two seem to go together.

He looked, and saw a little dog with a tin can tied just right to furnish, as it beat upon the ground, a kind of music for his flying feet; behind him ran three guffawing louts, laboring to keep the fun in sight. The fun darted to a bush, halting there to gape with trembling dismay upon the mysterious destiny which followed at his tail, a noisy horror that he could not leave behind. The louts ran up to stir him on to make another tune, then Pentland took a hand, or rather he gave it, and the biggest fellow took it, full in the mouth. Down he went with an awful thud; up dashed another, and down went he; the music now was made by Pentland's fist on rustic noses.

"I'll break every bone you've got!" he announced, a prospect holding so little lure for the three, that they hastily backed off.

As for Pentland, he said a good deal about their deserts, and started on his way. Started! but halted, for there was something that stayed his foot: a dirty ragged head, with two great brown eyes pleading.

"Be off!" cried Pentland, and started on.

Started on, so he did, but to the tune of tinny scraping as the little beast came slinking after him, and to the tune of voices warning him that he's our dog, and don't ye coax him off, by heck!

At this the wanderer turned around, and just to annoy these boorish country persons he cut the string that once bound dog to can, and started on again, walking as one who's buried deep in thought, until he heard the patter patter behind him: he whirled around and cried out gruffly,

"Stay back, I say! Why are you pestering me? I have no home to take you to. There's nothing in me for you. Begone!"

Once more the wanderer set off down the road; so did the little dog, at which Pentland was suddenly so weak and full of trembling that he sank down along the roadside. The beast crawled up to him and crept into his lap, pleading with his eyes that he might stay there in Heaven, quivering so violently that Pentland's hand went straying to his head, and Pentland's voice said gruffly, oh very very gruffly,

"What's the trouble? Did they hurt you?

No doubt, for there are scars on your head and neck and your body, too. They're hidden by the hair, but they're there just the same, just as there are wounds in my hidden heart. Stop licking my hand! Get down!"

He pushed the dog out of his lap, then seeing that passers-by were staring, he snarled,

"There's humanity for you! A procession of idiots, one after the other, a myriad atoms hurtling in a chaos, each with its inner will as impulse, and all their wills in conflict, and no over-power, no check save the prod and push and momentary balance of their mutual opposition! Chaos which breeds life! Well, it's bred life in me! Once I was almost indifferent to these atoms, blandly despised them, no more than that, but wandering among them brings me the friction that heats my passivity to urgent life! I, too, am become an atom with an inner impulse, and mine is hate!"

With a grandiose sweep of his arm he said to the staring dog,

"A reeling chaos of mad atoms, behold the world, and in it Arthur Pentland with his venom, his hate gleaming in opposition upon

all men, and happy if he can thwart them! Well, all things recur in time and chance will swing the unprotected belly of the world toward me, if only I wait long enough. As for you, I'll keep you just because these swine think it queer that a man with a beard on his face and a cur at his heel chooses to walk the road, while they roar along in their motor cars! Come along!"

He rose to go, paused, gazed down upon the dog, saying, oh not so very gruffly,

"I'll call you Creepie, because you crept into my lap."

VIII

Pentland called him Creepie, and the dog was happy, thinking the name beautiful, more wondrous fair than Percy Charles or Stagmont Junior or Harold Frankincense the Fourth! It was a joy to have a name of any kind, just think! a pair of syllables for his ear alone, a call to bring him darting up to have a bit of meat from Pentland, from that strange ageless wanderer whose heart lay dead —so he maintained—he who pronounced the name of Creepie harshly, yet sometimes as they

sat together, away from the sight of man, not so harshly after all.

Creepie! A silly name, but then he was a silly dog, a motley neither black nor brown, nor yellow, spotted or a tan, a garbled messy color of a dog, a wretch of a mongrel conceived in midnight raid upon an unwatched sheepfold, born in an alley, outside the holy bonds of kennel and canine pedigree, of two divergent strains themselves deep mixtures, a beast out of the ancient line of bastardy by chance, a scrap of all low life clept by the name of dog, cringing against the earth because he knew himself to be a vile and worthless thing, fit only to crawl in slime upon his belly, an empty vessel containing but one thing,—let's call it love.

Love! it is a cheap and common thing, perhaps that's why Creepie had so much of it. For so he had. The days passed by and as they passed, his eyes held less of pain and fear. Confusion went out of them, until at last they showed a calm and shining light, a liquid gaze so passionate, so soft, mostly so when it settled on stern cold Pentland. Love Creepie had in great abundance, and generously he gave it,

the silly silly, for you see he was not a human, but a dog, a beast adoring, without question or complaint, his sun moon stars and planetary master. Creepie followed him on and on, and when the wanderer sat down by the road and drooped his head, the silly dog with the silly name came up and licked his hand,—a simple act, you say, but one of power, for Pentland trembled and gave a cry, oh how surprising!

"Little beast," he cried, "you comfort me, but you cannot really help me, so do not try. Since Laura died my heart is only a black foul cavern where I live with hate, regret, and bitter memory. So many sad dull years of this . . . . . and yet sometimes, as now . . . . . there is a hint of growth in me. The years pass by, and outwardly I remain the same. I thought the shoots of my life were stunted to deadness . . . . . but perhaps they're only clipped. They seem to be strengthening . . . . . pushing up through the dross of habit . . . . . as if I were awakening from somnambulism!

"Yes, but if I am, it is to no purpose, little friend, for like that bush out there I'm locked to sterility. Just see, my Creepie, all about

us spring is surging to its blossom, but not that bush, for last autumn the birds came and ate its buds, pecked out its eyes, and now though it is full of sap that swells and aches, it cannot grow, because it has no eyes,—and so of your unhappy master, Creepie. My swelling ache is fast becoming horrible, a thing that's fed from some deep primordial hidden source, but there's no vent, no outlet. There are no apertures for growth to push up through. How strange to talk of growth through eyes. A figure of speech, and yet I wonder . . . . ."

Creepie licked his hand, and Pentland cried out brokenly,

"Silly beast, I pronounce you greater than humanity, because you have a heart, and man has none. People are only beasts, and though I love you a little, no one else shall have a friendly word from me. I curse the world and all within it! I curse myself, blind bush with eyes pecked out, I who can see only muddle where Laura saw the promise of order, light, and harmony! Oh what is wrong with me! What makes my brain reel so! What makes my heart give such a kick, like a child

within the womb! Great God, I'm going mad! There is no new life growing in me! It's only a tumor, an ever-gnawing ever-growing evil for which there is no cure, but when I walk I have a little ease, so let us go, my friend, and seek another place, though I have seen them all. Come, Creepie, we must go."

IX

And so they went upon their way, restless Pentland, faithful Creepie, the two of them together. Did I say two? Not two, but three: Pentland, Creepie, and another, one unseen and yet was there,—and Creepie no longer skipped and barked at Pentland's feet.

"Why Creepie, what's the matter? Are you hungry?"

Not hungry, but something was wrong. Pentland took him to a wise man.

"Nothing wrong with him," yawned the doctor, "except that he's getting old."

Nothing, except that he was getting old. That was all, but it was enough, for it seemed as if Pentland would fall as he stumbled through the door with Creepie in his arms,—but no, he made it. He got to the street, and

gazed about, and saw a road, a highway running far into the distance, a road to be travelled, and so as one who walks in dream he set one foot after the other, shaking, quivering, murmuring,

"No, no, no! He cannot die. I won't let him die!"

Won't let him die! Pentland won't let him die! Stand back, Fleshless One, I am Man and I am clever! I take a tiny blanket of silk and wool and fasten it on Creepie's little back, and then I pay a learned specialist to arrange a diet for him, and then I get some little shoes for doggy footies when the way is rough, so so. Come let us go!

Onward, for though the dog is withering in the grip of the invisible hand, Pentland must go on. Ah! the master is such a restless one, —what is his destination? No doubt it lies in the far and distant West, but when our footsteps bring us to the western sea, we circle round and turn our faces east again. Well! then the goal is in the East, and yet somehow it's not, nor in the South, nor in the North, as round and back and forth over the broad wide land America we wend our way.

A senseless way? Perhaps it is, at least it is barren of result, for although the master has a question that he puts to all he meets, no answer gives him satisfaction. To fools called wise, and sages known as fools, to these and many more he puts the self-same question: some laugh at him, some stare, some hand out their nonsense syllables, and Pentland goes on, striding the land from coast to coast, up mountain road, over bridges high above tempestuous rivers, lingering a while on storm-bound prairie but on at last, into all the corners of the mighty land America, seeking an answer to his question,—the little dog behind him.

Oh! master is so restless, never still for very long, always walking treading pacing, jerking even in his sleep, muttering in his dreams of how at last he knows he's seeking Truth, a needle on which he'll pierce all that's diffuse and contradictory, and with a single thread turn the welter to unity and pattern. Oh master! I'm your Creepie and I love you, but though I follow at your heel, I'm a puppy no more, but an old old dog with grizzling hair and falling teeth, and stiffened in the joints and blinded by a kind of glaze, until

it's hard to see you. I follow, but now I cannot seem to make my legs go on. Oh that a dog should whimper and complain, and yet I must, or else be left behind. Master!

It was a very tiny little bark, but Pentland whirled and ran back quick, to pick him up and carry him, to save his legs, and check the shadows marching round the sundial, a pointless march, save that it's sapping life away. Sapping life away, away, and Creepie licks the master's face, and Pentland's face is wet, though from another cause. O twisted bleary little dog, I weep for you. Oh do not die! I need you so. Without you I'll be all alone, more so than ever in my life before. I wish that I could grow old and die with you, but it cannot be. By destiny I am bound to Life, not Death."

This and much more said Pentland as he went upon his way, the dog held tight in his arms to keep him from the Fleshless One. In secret whispers he presently spoke in quite another strain, and Creepie felt the love no longer in disguise within that stony man, and nestled in his arms, content. Creepie nestled there and Pentland murmured and caressed

him, and the little dog, he who had been so long in pain, complained no more, no, not in this world, for having played his rôle he had departed to another place, a place of myth, so some folks say, but I say this, that if the dumb four-foots that I have loved possess no soul, then I have none, nor wish for one.

X

Sixteen years at the heels of Arthur Pentland, a dog! a mangy cur! a dirty bastard with a silly name and of no breed, no breed at all save from all breeds, a scarred and ugly beast crawling up out of the matrix of primeval slime, to follow the man who cannot die, sixteen long years,—and died.

He died, and Pentland turned aside, off from the road, to bury Creepie, returning to the earth the fragment lifted from it for a moment's breath, digging a grave with his own hands, *factus homo!* clawing to the breast of mother earth, and not seeing very well, for tears are blinding and so hot, they come in bitter scalding floods, that's how tears come when we are desolated. Books say it's weak for men to shed tears, but here there are no

books, no rules of etiquette, no straight-jackets for a bursting heart, and Arthur Pentland weeps. He weeps and brokenly he murmurs,

"Little dog, I named you Creepie in the long ago; you crept into my lap and then into my heart. I loved my mother and my wife, but for you, Creepie, my love was different. It seemed so intimate and of myself, and yet it hinted at a surge beyond myself, and beyond you, also, a kind of tremulous aspiration, as of a tendril uncurling from its stalk, reaching out toward heights as far from me as I myself am far from that profound abysmal source from which it sprang. I was a starveling, then your love came to build a channel to the reservoir, showing me a new umbilicus, from which I had great nourishment, till Death strode up and cut the cord."

He hid his face in his hands,

"Oh Creepie! you are at peace, but I am doomed to go on floundering in the viscous mire of Time, plunging and thrashing,—I'm weary. It's taught me the depth and possibilities of the field of Life, but when am I to drift up out of the fog of sleep to wakeful-

ness? When am I to see the ordered sense so often hinted at? Miserable little dog, your existence was preferable to mine. I the aristocrat! Aristocrat! Good God, we were all a *type!* a generic form stamped by the die of circumstance! moulded to one series by convention and tradition! Our class was but a troupe of selfsame manikins, against which lurched democracy, to break the vessel holding us, let out its uniform ingredients, and they, dividing! parting! found their way to earth, to take on the peculiarities that breed up individuals. What! Am I spilled upon the earth? Am I to leave off being a type, and become myself?"

He beat his fists against his brow, moaning, drawing in quick little breaths, his face a-tremble with the surge of thought, and now he blurted out,

"Old vessel aristocracy, what a bloodless shell it was! And what was its destruction but a concrete example to illustrate a larger later abstruse conception? . . . . The grander trend is toward the breaking down of Heaven's shell, that men may flee the narrow unreality of creed! flee the somnambulism of ritual!

escape back to earth, and there awaken and spring into action as individuals! All at once it dawns upon me that my span from birth till now has also been the span of profound change in man's regard for Heaven: I've seen the thirst for immortality decline, supplanted by human aims on earth. In this unheralded shift, perhaps there's comfort—Christ! how can there be comfort? For me there is no comfort."

His puzzling thoughtful face was convulsed with rage,

"What a grim sardonic jest! This trend can only lead to greater horror! We abandon Heaven and turn to earth, but to what purpose? To none at all, for when we cleave to the things of *this* world, we're tricked into loving what must wither in our hand. I feel suspicion's prod in me, for though there is no plan to life, yet in the fact that I was lured to love this little beast only to have him die, I see a sentient hand! There is no God in Heaven! There is no Satan in Hell! But there is some thing, some one who's torturing me, me! the man who cannot die!"

He seized a stick and swung it wide in

menace, crying in a voice half snarl half bellow,

"I say there's something jerking me here and jerking me there, and though I talk to space, and rave as madmen rave, I seem to see a hidden cavern where my evil genius lurks and mocks me! You mock me, eh? By God, come out! and though you loom as devil, fiend and superman, I'll tear you limb from limb, and stamp your eyeballs into mud, turn out your blood, and laugh to see you suffer, as you have laughed at me! Come forth! Reveal yourself and be destroyed! Declare your name, you great Unknown!"

With these impassioned words he sprang to his feet, gasping, trembling, growling, glaring red-eyed in all directions, searching for his foe, challenging the jester, but as he sent his stare over all that broad and sunny landscape, there was nothing to be seen, and nothing to be heard—ah wait! there was a sound, a faint one, a far away and distant murmur, a kind of weak attenuated humming, an imaginary sound, no doubt, no doubt.

Imaginary sound! No sound at all! At least so Pentland thought, for with a sob he

turned to the grave again, sank to his knees and said farewell to Creepie. A long long time he lingered there, but at last he rose and with his dragging and despairing feet he stumbled toward the road, and stumbled on his way. The road led through a wood: there were no houses, but Pentland didn't mind the lonely place, for he was intent upon the seething company of his thoughts,

"Manipulation! that's it! I am a puppet on a string, jerked to a snare! I see the pointless repetition of my life is but a blind to hide my destination until it is too late. The hellish scheme is showing clear! It is a noose that's drawing tight about me! I struggle and hold back, but there are barbs in back of me. Oh horror that I be prodded on to do the very thing I loathe, to open up my soul to mankind's knock! Where is my rancor now? Where is the bottomless gut in which for years and decades I've been storing up my poisonous venom, awaiting a chance to vomit forth with best effect! I thought my hate was strong, but all at once it's sick despair. Some thing, some one has touched me, reducing me to utter weakness! Who is it? Who's is the

hand so long manipulating from a secret spot, sending sorrow upon sorrow, but no mercy, no hope! Who are you, pitiless one? Come forth! Reveal yourself! Declare your name, you great Unknown!"

Muttering groaning in this wild delirious fashion, giving vent to such unheard of fancy, he stumbled on and on, upon a road that lay upon a plain, and as he wandered, lo! the sun was sinking swiftly and the twilight coming on, twilight and after that the dusk with its softly silent, all enfolding shadows. It was a time of day for worse, not better sight, but Pentland in the gloom was lifting up his head, as one upon whom breaks a ray of long-sought bright illumination. Rage had gripped him and fled, despair had followed after, the note within him now was something else,

"Once I called and got no answer! Again I called and got no answer! This third time I lift my voice, seeking to know of him who knows, does twilight stand at either end of waking life, or only at one? I am moved like a dummy, but I could endure if only the Player would assure me that the earth on which I move is a chessboard, and if my pains

as wanderer are incident to progress, the necessary thrusts received in a game that leads to victory, not defeat. The spleen I kept within my bones so long, O God! it can't be sweetened now, or if it can, how can it?

"How can it? I feel it can, and yet I doubt! I'm torn between what has been and what is to be, and as a consequence I'm bleeding raw. Why is it that with every halting step forward I am jerked back! I must know, for if this wrenching between the old and the new does not yield Pentland to the one or the other very soon, I am lost! Deep in my soul wonder is dawning, and hope, too, and courage to go on. I cry out in distress of it—it's sweet, but it frightens me! What is the aim, the end, the point and purpose of it all? I ask in all humility, of him who weaves my destiny! Oh it is time I saw you face to face! Come forth! Reveal yourself! Declare your name, you great Unknown!"

Thus calling in a softly pleading voice, Pentland gazed about in expectation. He looked, and saw the darkness spreading o'er the plain: he was alone. He listened, but heard no sound, save only a faint one, a far

away and distant murmur, and presently not so far away, a distant, coming-closer murmur, a humming stronger and more strong, till lo! piercing the darkness of the night he saw a gleam of light, and two, a pair of great luminous eyes which swept the plain and searched for Arthur Pentland, a Thing that glided closer and more closely up.

And seeing this, he was afraid. He trembled, his lips turned white, and as the automobile came bounding toward him, closer, closer, he turned and ran, confused and terrified, ran stumbling falling rising, not knowing where he went, save that he was fleeing the dazzling brilliance of those eyes. Suddenly they were gone, but still he ran, now sick at heart, not knowing what he wanted, until he saw rise up before him a building, and on the front of it a sign declaring that here were beds for rent, that weary ones might rest.

XI

Shown to his room, he fell across the bed, and sank into a heavy slumber, seeming as one who never more would waken, that kind of sleep. A long long sleep, profound and very

deep, all night slumbering there with his face so strangely calm, never moving when the clock struck ten, never twitching at eleven, at rest before and after midnight. Through the early morning hours, too, he lay there, sleeping still when the dawn came spreading, a slow insidious spreading of new light, a twilight of the night and day, for twilight lies at either end of waking life.

Slow spreading came the dawn of that new day, a cool and dewy day in springtime, when all the air is briskly filling with a host of fresh upspringing odors, and then from out of the clean and cloud-swept skies, out from the very heart of heaven, a little breeze came stirring, a tremulous airy breath, invisible messenger that stirred the dirty curtain at the dirty window, the dirty pillow of the dirty bed, there where Pentland lay.

Messenger unminded, and after a while it went away, and the morning air was very still, until from somewhere outside that cheap hotel, out in some tree, some glen, some bush, there was a bird that sang. There on the bed lay Arthur Pentland, never hearing, at which the bird sang louder, a voice of pure untarnished

melody that told of promise and a brighter hope and love,—so sang the thrush and wakened Pentland.

His eyes opened very slowly; he looked about and moaned and sank back on the pillow. To drift away into another dream of bliss, such was his wish, but the hidden thrush sang oh! so piercingly, calling as a herald calls, rousing life to the dawn, urging to the tasks of that new day, a new day, Pentland, ah! never was there such a day as this, not in your long and weary life.

Again he slowly opened wide his eyes, and now he seemed to know a bird was singing, seemed to realize it was a thrush, just such a one as many years ago sang in a certain garden, back there in old-time Philadelphia, when Laura came to him. Oh! the thrush's song was wondrous then, inspiriting and full of courage, a trumpet full of happiness, but this was mockery, a taunt, a madness beyond all bearing. Pentland sat up in bed, crying,

"Go 'way! Go 'way!"

Yet only louder and more bravely sang the bird, insistent, pouring out its vision of what that new fine day would be, at which a raging

fury seized on Pentland: he sprang from the bed and seized the pitcher from the stand, he gnashed his teeth and cried,

"I'll kill you! I'll kill you dead, and then I'll have a little rest!"

Crying this he rushed across the room and glared out through the window, and saw no bird. No bird at all, but something there across the street he saw, a figure standing as one who pauses just in passing, and Pentland was transfixed, for what he saw was this: a man, blond in the face and broad of shoulder, a ruddy man, a great and powerful figure exuding strength, virility, and force, a man dressed in a suit of tweed . . . . .

The Blind Alley And The Eye

I

One last wrench with the razor, and he paused to stare into the mirror: his features were full and strong, the lips red, the hair black as night, the jaw tenacious and the nose bold,—it was a handsome face, but not a happy one, and as he stood and rubbed his smooth-shaven cheeks his pale eyes gleamed with ferocity. His lips writhed back from the teeth in a snarl, then with an oath he snatched up his hat and strode from the room. Now for the stuff that drowns trouble till it's dead!

Out into the street he goes, grim and more grim with every stare that greets his question. But go on, Pentland, never mind the smiles that answer you! You only have to follow those who know—you see, I told you true, for there's a door and right inside, well! see for yourself: the bar and the fiery stuff behind it. And now begin, remembering what you've sworn: here's an end to declamation on the theme of love and sick soul and destiny and

all that. From here on it's drink and drink, until all your woe is drowned. Drown it, Pentland, drown it! Destroy the fish with water! Oppress the bird with air! Have a drink!

II

He did, and had another and a third one, whereupon his face began to flush, and he turned to glower upon the soggy hulks that sat there guzzling: one of these was forlorn and ragged and a sot, full of belated tears and maudlin talk; he sucked up what others left behind, reeling along the bar,

"I'm drunk, by God! I'm nothin' but a beast, but say! you guys, there was a time when I was Mister to the world. I loved a woman, but Fate came up and wrenched her from me!"

"Shut up!" cried Pentland.

"I'm drunk, and nothin' but a driftin' hulk, but while She lived, I was a man! Gimme a drink, fella, and I'll sing fer you, er better still, I'll now recite the great American classic, entitled, gents, *The Face Upon The Barroom Floor!*"

"Shut up, you ass!" cried Pentland, and threw his whiskey on the bum.

" 'Smatter?" babbled this one, staggering close. "Say, don' git sore. Judy O'Grady an' the Dutchy Lady's sisters under the skin, like you an' me, ole pal. Why, we're brothers! Come on and kiss me!"

"Stand back, you swine, you filthy sot, you drunken beast! I loathe you, you and your class and your very species! Come one step nearer and I'll split your head for you."

"Want to fight, huh? Aw right, by damn, it's all the same to me. My name is Bob Heath, you cock-eyed swell, and I kin knock yer block off—just watch me!"

He lunged at Pentland and Pentland struck at him. They twisted and surged and ducked and dodged, struck blows and got them. The bartender took a jovial hand, somebody took another, bottles supplanted fists, oh what a fracas! A good time being had by all—a whistle—a shout of cops, and Pentland fled, though not until he'd knocked his brother to the floor, jumped on him, kicked him in the face, the face upon the barroom floor, then he ran, out through a storeroom, into the street, brass-buttons close behind.

"Duck in here," cried a low sharp voice. "Quick!"

He saw a door, a face, a beckoning finger, and whirled in answer to the invitation. There was a hum, a roar, and what he had leaped into sprang away, leaving the policeman to scratch his head and curse at bums who make their escape by automobile, in this case a speedy car driven by a youngish man, dapper, hat on the side of his head, a careless mouth,

"Give 'em the slip, I guess. What was the row, anyhow?"

"A fight."

"Fight, eh? Did ye beat him up?"

"I did," growled Pentland. "I beat him up, as I would like to do every human creature if I—"

"I like a fight m'self once in a while," the other laughed, steering deftly through the crowded streets. "Puts a kick in life, an' keeps a fellow from gittin' stale at his work. I'm a auto salesman—what's your business?"

"I have none."

"Wheeoooo! Rich chap, eh? Lucky cuss, I wish I had your chance. My folks had money once—they come from 'way back East some-

where—Dillon's my name, Edward Dillon —we don't amount to much any more, but our family was swells once, very refined, too, they tell me. *Jesus!* did ye see that close call? If we'd hit that post, we'd have been in Hell by now!"

"Then turn back and try again!" cried Pentland. "I've tried to kill myself, but somehow I can't. You try for me. Go to it, bang against the next post you see!"

"Ha ha ha ha! You don't mean that, I guess. It's a wonderful old world, if ye don't weaken. But say! we're gittin' out of town. I'll turn back now. Where'll I take ye?"

"To Hell."

"Ho ho ho ho! You're full of moonshine, boy. To Hell? Say! if I was a rich guy like you, I'd have a time. I bet you're kiddin' me, makin' believe you're the cuss that put the blue in sea water. What you need's a change."

"A change! If only there could be a change, it might be that I'd have some rest. It's the sameness of all things that's driving me mad. I'm like one of your damned automobiles, sound as a dollar, with my engine chugging strong, but though I make a noise I get

nowhere at all. I'm a car that's parked along the roadside."

"Parked along the roadside!" cried Dillon. "Say! you ride with me, and you'll not think you are a parked machine. Say! let's start a little club of good fellows, and raise Hell and put a block under it. That'll make you forget your troubles."

"I'm a stranger here."

"Maybe you are, but I ain't. I know who to invite. There's Frankie Jones, a wonderful guy. We'll leave out Fred Black, he's a pill. Tom Smith, he's another wonderful guy, but that brother of his we'll give the cold shoulder, he's a pill. Johnnie Hencher is a wonderful guy, we'll take him, and bounce that ham he travels with, he's another pill. You let me do it. I'll show ye."

"Show me, then!" cried Pentland, "but hurry! Hurry, before I go mad!"

III

Dillon hurried, ran here ran there, spreading among his friends the news of a rich guy come to town, one lousy with gold coin and sick of life, hence eager to spend to pass the

time, opening wide his pocket for trouble-drowning booze, hooray! News of a certain Pentland, a stranger, but what the hell of that? he's rich and a damned good fellow, somewhere in his thirties, dressed like a secretary of the Y. M. C. A. at first, but better now, new sport clothes that must have cost like blazes, and one of them imported hats that separates ye from half yer bloody check book. Ye ought to see 'im with a cigarette a-hangin' out his mouth, him with the bloodshot eye, oh boy! that guy's raised his hell before.

Perhaps he has, but now he'll raise some more, because we're getting up a club of jolly chaps. Wonderful guys are wanted, but no pills! We call ourselves the Frolickers, and it's our purpose to get the world up in a corner and twist its little tail off! Come over here, meet Pentland, Pentland of Pittsburgh. Sh-h-h, rich as hell, good guy. A little queer, but he gets more human when he's full, so let's fill him up. See how he looks at the empty bottle in his hand, despair in his eyes, why! that's because it's empty! He's blue and wants to drown his troubles, that's why he's calling in a hoarse loud voice,

"Dillon! More wine! more whiskey!"

"More whiskey! more wine! and hooray! for we're the Frolickers!"

"The Frolickers!" cried Pentland. "That's what we are. Life is a frolic, a song and dance, a jest! Life is a jest, a cruel and monstrous jest, a jest that—"

"Hooray, that's the stuff! Life is a frolic, and to hell with all long faces, eh, Pentie?"

"Quite so," cried Arthur Pentland. "To hell with all long faces. Perhaps they're there already, but if they're not, why down with them into the Pit. No bursting hearts are wanted here, but only gay and joyous ones. We're the Frolickers, and the world is our—"

"Our oyster!" roared Dillon, spilling liquor down his front.

"Our oyster!" cried Pentland, "that's it, the world's our oyster. Some oysters have a way of slipping up to bring confusion and dismay, but drink like hell and we'll keep this one down. Drown it with liquor, that's the way to conquer grief. Hooray for booze, but say! let's go to another place, just for variety. *Natura hominum novitatis avida!* as old Pliny would have it!"

"That's Latin he's talking," cried Dillon to the others. "He's been educated, Pentie has, just like my folks that used to be back East. They studied that stuff themselves, and so did I when I was a kid. *Amō amās amat,* that's the talk we want. My folks petered out when they come West, but once upon a time—"

"Another place!" cried Pentland, fiercely. "Let's go to where there's more liquor and more noise, and more hell to raise, since we're placing blocks under it. I tell you I can't bear it here. I must keep down the oyster that's rising up in me. I must and I will! I don't care what else happens, so long as I can flout the world. I loathe and hate the human race, I swear I do, and don't you forget it! To hell with all humanity, with babes unborn and little children toddling, to fires eternal with clear-eyed youth, with girls and boys, the callow gawks! To all damnation with maidens and their lovers, with freshly-married couples and their hopes and dreams, to hell with middle age, and as for all those ancient ones that scoff at me, and pull away and leave me all alone, I wish the hell of hells for them!"

"Hooray!" cried Dillon, pounding the table

in applause, "Now he's in form. Say! can't he talk? He ought to be a public speaker, there's money in it if ye git on Chautauqua. Come on, Pentie, let's go to where you'll feel your oats and feel 'em stronger. You guys, all the rest of you, come on! The *Restaurant de Super Luxe*, that's where we'll meet!"

IV

Away, and mock the time with fairest show! So sang the greatest of American poets, and so sang the mighty Frolickers, as they rushed out into the street and to their automobiles. Pentland clambered in with Dillon, who laughed and shouted out,

"Say, Pentie, it's time you learnt to drive. Come on, old sport, move over there. You can do it. Simple as hell. Grab the wheel. I'll tell you what to do."

Pause . . . . . fumble . . . . . the car lurched forward, wobbling crookedly this way and that, but moving under Pentland's hands. He was laughing with a strange delight. Dillon cautioned him,

"Hey, not so much gas, for the love of Mike."

More gas at that: the car lunged through the crowded street. Dillon yelled and grabbed the wheel,

"For Christ sake, man, you're drunk. Come on, climb back, and let me at it. We'll learn ye when you're sober. You headed straight for that truck, don't ye know ye did? Hadn't been for me grabbin' the wheel, we'd o' been in Hell by now. What's the matter? What ye groanin' for? Sick?"

"Yes . . . . . yes, I'm sick. I tell you I'm sick. I'm sick of this and everything, I'm sick of life—"

"There ye go agin! When a fellow talks of being sick o' life, he needs a good stiff drink. Wait till we git to where we're goin', there's plenty there."

With this promise of a cure for his friend's distemper, Dillon steered round a corner and past an automobile standing at the curb.

"That man back there!" cried Pentland. "The man we passed just now! Look!"

Dillon looked, and

"Well, what of it? A man, that's all. Ye act like it wus a ghost."

"Have you ever seen him before?"

"Why, yes, I kinda think I have. Been hangin' around town lately—stranger—same as you."

"Turn back!" cried Pentland, with chattering teeth. "Turn back, I say. We'll run him down and break his neck. Turn back!"

"Ha ha ha ha ha ha! Why go back and start a fuss, when there's a good time straight ahead? He's just some fool, anyhow."

"A fool?" cried Pentland, eagerly. "Are you sure he's just a fool?"

"Sure thing. I know a fool when I see one, don't I?"

"Ha ha ha ha ha ha! You're right, I'll wager you are! He's a fool, that's what he is. By the way, his car was broken, wasn't it?"

"Didn't notice," grunted Dillon, slowing at a crossing, "but what the hell do we care?"

"His car was broken, I know it was. He'll never catch us, will he?"

"Catch us, hell," answered the auto salesman, darting with the traffic. "Say, boy, you don't know what kind of a machine you're ridin' in. This here's a Lancelot, the slickest, fastest thing on wheels. Comes from the biggest factory, made of the best materials, 's got

the smallest upkeep, and the foxiest fixtures, and the niftiest engine there ever was, in short, by damn, it is the greatest little whiz, the pluckiest little bang of a car that's made, all the others are only imitation. That guy back there'll never catch up with us, you bet your life on that!"

"He'll never catch up with us," Pentland cried again, and then once more, "he'll never catch up with us."

"The Lancelot! That's her name, and say! you ought to see her on a hill or in the mud!"

"We've left him far behind. He'll never never catch us now."

"It's *the* machine, that's all! A car ye can't git along without. Easy terms, and all of that. Whoa! we're there. Them colored lights is where we're bound for, the *Restaurant de Super Luxe*. Pile out, here come the other fellows now."

V

De Super Luxe! with massive shining silver, and costly flowers, lackeys resplendent in uniforms of gold and green, electric lights in

great gigantic clusters, lavish decoration everywhere, lest you forget you're in a place where money is no object. A wide wide dining hall, and in one corner, half screened off by drapery imported at enormous cost from Persia (or was it Siam?), there stood a large round table, one fit for consecrated knights of the flowing bowl: the Frolickers seized it. Sixteen wonderful guys sat down, then from a bower of artificial grapes an orchestra began to play, and Pentland scowled to see the place filled with smug and prosperous-looking people.

"Look at those idiots," he snarled. "Look at them, and tell me, where is the home life of this damned country gone to? What's the fireside but a name, when people spend their time in a vulgar place like this?"

"Hooray!" cried Dillon, "here comes the booze!"

They had a drink, and seeing that his friend was still glaring about, the auto salesman laughed,

"What're ye lookin' at, Pentie? Them Jews? Say, I don't blame ye. Why they let them yids in here, is more than I can tell. I'm Amurican, I am, and I draw the line at beaks

like that. Niggers and wops and hunkies, and dagoes and guineas and kikes, and all them Jews, I got no use for 'em. Amuricans is wonderful guys, but foreigners is pills. Jews! Say, they'se crooked as a dog's hind leg, but I fixed one once. He tried to jip me on a deal, but I sold him a car with a warped frame, that's how I turned the tables on the Israelity Hebrew, the Christ-killin' son-of-a-bitch! Tried to cheat me, did he? Well, I done 'im brown, and he'll not tackle me again, I bet. They can't cheat me, they can't, for I'm the slickest salesman in our office. I got the highest record of them all. I took first prize last year. I'll git it this year, too, or know the reason why. Hooray for Eddie Dillon, for he's Amurican! Let's have a drink."

They had a drink and Pentland shuddered,

"What makes it taste so bitter?"

"Oh, hell, because of prohibition!"

"Prohibition?"

"Sure! This state's dry, or supposed to be, and now, by God, them grafters back in Washington have got a law to make the whole cussed land dry. Say, they can't pull that stuff on us Amuricans. This is a free country,

and it belongs to us. I never did take much till the state went dry, but after that I drank like hell. I break their crumby law ever' chanst I get. I'm Amurican, and I ain't goin' to have 'em tell *me* what I can do and what I can't. Hooray, it's rotten booze, but then it's booze, and it tastes a damned sight better when ye know ye're guzzlin' it agin the wishes of the law, them that's always pickin' on a honest hard-workin' man. Let's have a drink."

They had a drink, and Dillon cried,

"That's the way to down it, fellers. Me, when I drink I like to drink, see? They say them Dutch guys over there across the Pond go off under a tree and set and sip their booze all ev'nin'. They must be bughouse. The way to drink is to open wide yer guzzle, tell guts to look out, here she comes, and down it at a swaller. When I'm on the water-wagon I'm on the water-wagon, and when I drink, I go swimmin' in it, that's me. I'm Amurican, and hooray for the way they drink bad whiskee in the land of libertee! Say, what the hell, Pentie, old man! I thought ye wus laughin', but I'll be damned if ye don't look like ye wus cryin'. What's the matter?"

Pentland lifted his head, and showed his eyes all flashing wet,

"The toothache! The toothache! that's all! A silly thing to cry about, isn't it? It hurts, but if I say it's gone, it'll disappear, won't it? Ha ha ha ha ha! The way to be happy is to ignore all else, eh? Ha ha ha ha ha ha! And haven't we a right to happiness? Haven't we? Answer me, damn you, answer me!"

"We have!" cried the wonderful guy, Frankie Jones.

"A right to happiness!" cried the wonderful guy, Tommy Smith.

"The Constitution says so!" cried the wonderful guy, Johnnie Hencher.

"Hooray!" cried Edward Dillon, most wonderful guy of all. "So say we all of us, and I'll add this: there's happiness in every bottle! Booze is a cure for all the ills that am, and some that ain't! Fill up yer glasses, gents, the ev'nin' ain't begun."

The orchestra had struck up, the center of the floor was filling with couples, and Pentland took another drink. Sweet wondrous jazzy jazz that sent ladies shuddering against their partners, sent partners pantomiming act

that leads to more of us, and Pentland trembled,

"This liquor's unnerving me, Dillon. I'm all a-quiver. Great God, there's something wrong with me."

Chuckling whispering auto salesman,

"You horny cuss, I'll pick you a good one. See that little short one there? What d'ye say?"

"What do I say?" cried Pentland savagely, "I say to hell with such as she! There was a time when women were modest, possessing charm and grace, women worthy of respect and reverence, but that was in the ancient past, so long ago that to you of this disgusting age they seem as fabulous as the sailor Sinbad. They've vanished, lingering only in my tortured memory, and these—they're sluts!"

"You're crazy," said Frankie Jones.

"That's the why they make 'em nowadays," said Tommy Smith.

"Look at that tall blond over there," said Johnnie Hencher.

"Some wheel base!" said Eddie Dillon. "What more could ye want?"

"Sluts!" cried Pentland. "So I pronounce

the modern girl. Undersized and misbegotten runts, they reek with a smell perfume can never down! *Non bene olet, qui bene semper olet,* I'll wager that! Bobbed hair! so that I see a sexless and untidy neck that sends a shudder over me, a shudder rooting in the instinct of repulsion. Monsters! Boy-girls is what they are, hermaphrodites affecting dresses, they make me want to vomit. They're not women!"

"The hell they ain't! You lay out with one and see!"

"I'd sooner touch a leper!" cried Pentland. "They're prostitutes, whores and harridans, rifled of their charms at puberty, at twenty wise in vile excesses. Not women, but clearly female, for what was once kept privately is now the deed before all eyes. Right in the street they comb their hair and adjust their shoulder straps, and paint their faces like a mask. They love innovation! Well, here's one: a bit of tissue in their purse, and then there'll be no need to get in off the street at all. Look at that one! halting to shift her hose and show the bare flesh up above! No corsets and dresses thin! for body lines must

show through, else there's no lure! Fleshy floppy parts held insecurely, threatening as they spring about, to flee all bandage, and as you look at them from the rear, the distance of a hundred yards can't hide from you the line that cleaves them posteriorly, giving them, the beasts, what science calls bilateral symmetry!"

"That's Latin!" hiccoughed Edward Dillon.

"Of all this generation, it's the female half I hate most of all," cried Pentland, "for in their very sex they insult the memory of my holy pair. Two noble women swayed me in turn, but faith and reverence can never again come to me from such a source, for the women of to-day are nothing but empty stupid clots of filthy flesh, oh how I hate them!"

"Oh yes you do!" jeered Dillon, "but just the same you got your eye on that tall blond! You know damned well she's signalling you."

"Vile creature!" snarled Pentland, "doubly vile! to make her overtures when I despise her. I look at her, it's true, but only in revulsion. Great God, it *is* revulsion, I swear it is, and yet it has a hint of something more hideous, a crawling insinuation of the flesh, the net of

lust with which this viper is enfolding me! But I'll not yield to it! I hate her, and before she robs me of my self-respect, I'll destroy her. I'll kill the bitch, and right this minute, too!"

With this he seized a bottle and sprang to his feet and darted toward the dance floor, the Frolickers streaming after him, some in dismay and some in laughter. Fast at his heels they came, and caught up with him, and then there was a crash: the doors of the *Restaurant de Super Luxe* swung wide, and down the stairs there poured, and into the dining room there streamed, a mob of well-dressed smiling happy prosperous men, storming the place like a victorious army, thronging the aisles and crowding to the tables, surrounding the Frolickers,—they were a horde through which there was no passing, and all of them were shouting,

"Tissue paper! Tissue paper! We are the manufacturers of it!"

"The manufacturers and jobbers, retailers, advertisers, also the salesmen of it!"

"Hooray for us, for this is our convention week!"

Pentland collapsed in Edward Dillon's arms, gurgling weakly,

"Hee hee hee! Hee hee hee hee! Hee hee hee hee hee!"

VI

"Fellow conventioners!" their chairman roared above the tumult. "Find seats, anywhere at all, we're only staying for a drink! It's late, and to-morrow is the big day, all speech and demonstration!"

What power leaders do possess! One word from them and all the common run of men press to obey, as a thousand sheep wheel round at the shepherd's shout: the chairman gave command, the mob obeyed. They swarmed in all directions, a wave that pushed the Frolickers back and back, until Pentland and his friends were once more at their table in the corner, with a ring of extra guests: conventioners with faces thin and faces fat, and some with hair and some without, men from every corner of America, diverse ones bound to a common Cause, made one by the unity of their product, oh this is our convention week!

"Great year we've had, fine, splendid, lovely!"

"The biggest yet, we've got to celebrate."

"Parade to-morrow, that's what we'll do. Hooray!"

"Hooray!" cried Pentland. "We are great, let us be greater!"

The cry went round the table, and out across the restaurant, and to its farthest corner,

"Hooray! We are great, let us be greater!"

Everyone laughed, but Pentland laughed most of all, he thrown into a fit of such uproarious merriment that those at a distance poked each other in the ribs, and wagged their heads, and said,

"Jolly chap over there at the big round table. Looks like he might be from Chicago. Great market for our product in Chicago some day."

Pentland laughed and every one laughed with him, until a voice rang out,

"Come on, all you conventioners! We've made a day of it,—let's get to bed. This is our hundredth anniversary, but we need some sleep. One drink more, but this is the last

one. Let's drink to 1919, the present year, but more than that, let's drink in memory of a century ago, the great old year when we began our great career. Here's to old 1819, the year in which we set our foot upon the road toward finer bigger greater things!"

"Hooray!" cried Pentland, holding up his glass. "Here's to old 1819, the year in which—"

With a gasp he broke off. His face turned sick, his glass slipped from his hand, he sank into a chair as if crushed there by a mighty blow,—and now because the hour was late, the conventioners had gone, the diners and the dancers, too, were going home: the Frolickers were left behind to be as happy as they liked. Said Pentie with a damned queer voice,

"What month is this?"

Dillon laughed and slapped him on the back,

"April! the month when booze is in season."

"The date?"

"The date? Oh hell, I don't know. The fifteenth, I guess."

Then all the Frolickers gaped, for Arthur

Pentland had sprung to his feet, crying, as he clung to the table for support,

"I say! my dear, dear friends, we've got to celebrate! Order up more booze, prepare to drink! We've got to celebrate, for such is done on anniversaries, and this is mine,—I had forgotten it. One hundred years ago, that chairman said, do you remember? Ha ha ha ha ha ha!"

"Ha ha ha ha ha ha!" went the Frolickers.

"In the city of Philadelphia!" cried Pentland, "ho ho ho ho ho ho!"

"Ho ho ho ho ho ho!"

"A far and distant city, where there lived a man by the name of Richard Bacon! Haw haw haw haw haw haw!"

"Haw haw haw haw haw haw!"

"Who started a business that we must celebrate, oh we are gathered in convention! Hee hee hee hee hee hee!"

"Hee hee hee hee hee hee!"

VII

They had to celebrate, a thing impossible without more liquor,—and so it came: bottles in procession, tall ones with eager wine inside,

dark squat containers yielding stuff more sinister, flasks bearing outlandish names, plain bottles bulging full of whiskey, all these upon the great round table, there where the Frolickers sat.

They had the place all to themselves, almost. The wide expansive restaurant was deserted save for the Frolickers, and one other. Hooray! cried Pentland, and seized his glass to toast himself, when with his bleary not-seeing-very-clearly eyes he looked across the dining hall: in a corner, back turned to the merrymakers, sat a solitary figure, motionless. Pentland blinked to clear his sight, and grasping Dillon by the arm he whispered hoarsely,

"There he is again. Who is that man, I say, that stranger there?"

"Huh? Oh, him? He's just a feller, I suppose. Maybe one of them convention guys left behind. What the hell do we care, anyhow? It's your birthday, ain't it? We gotta drink!"

Pentland seized his glass again, and raised it high,

"Yes, we've got to drink, so down with it!"

Dillon,

"Come on, you Frolickers, drink hearty. This is Pentie's birthday. He's . . . . . say, Pentie, how old did ye say ye wus?"

Pentland, with a strange face, and stranger voice,

"I'll tell you, if you really want to know."

"Of course we want to know! What the hell! We gotta know so we can drink ye a long life, ain't we? I ain't no wop, I know how to do things. I'm in the *Social Register!* How old are ye?"

Pentland sent his pale gray eyes around the circle of boozy staring faces, and calmly said,

"Fellow Frolickers, I am one hundred and thirty-eight years old."

"Ha ha ha ha ha ha!"

"Ho ho ho ho ho ho!"

"Haw haw haw haw!"

"Hee hee hee hee hee!"

What a Pentie! He sure do like his little joke! Ha ha ha ha ha ha!

"Here's to m' friend, Art Pentland," Dillon cried. "He's thirty-eight to-day!"

"I said one hundred and thirty-eight!"

"Ha ha ha ha ha ha!"

"Ho ho ho ho ho ho!"

"Haw haw haw haw!"

"Hee hee hee hee hee!"

What a Pentie! If he don't watch out, he'll be the death of all us fellers, him an' his little jokes! 'Ray fer Pentie, pickled a'ready!

"Hun'erd an' thirty-eight, eh?" chuckled Dillon, slapping at the shoulder of his friend. "Say, how does it feel to be so goddam old—hic—tell us! Fellers—ugh—there's an idea, how hell would it feel to be so damn' old? Come on, Pentie Wentie, you can sling the words, and besides, by hell, birthday's a time fer makin' speeches!"

"Speech! Speech! Speech!"

"Hooray fer Pentie Wentie!"

"He's goin' tell us how it feels like to be hun'erd an' forty-seven!"

Applause.

"And so you want to know just how it feels to be as old as I am?" said Pentland. "Fill up my glass, and I will tell you."

The glass filled up with liquor, the orator tossed it off, then again he seized Dillon by the arm,

"Look! The stranger has turned around to face us, as if to listen to what I have to say! Who is that man?"

"Oh hell!" belched Dillon, "he's somebody, I suppose. Go on, let's hear yer yarn."

"Yes, yes," the others cried, "go on, go on. Forward with yer song an' dance. How do the world look to you, you goddam six hun'erd ole cuss? You Pentie you, what's your idea of it?"

And Pentland, with his staring eyes upon the stranger far across the restaurant, murmured low and huskily,

"It's nonsense."

"Ha ha!" the Frolickers shouted out, "ha ha! ha ha! Nonsense sure as Hell, but say! we're only foolin', just to keep ourself awake. Come on an' make a speech, just like the idea's sense, not nonsense! It's all a joke. We're just pretending!"

VIII

"We're just pretending!" Pentland cried. "Suppose, then, that we pretend there is a man who cannot die! Pretend he finds the world unreal! incredible! a ghastly phan-

tasmagoria beyond the bounds of sense and reason, belief or understanding!"

"Hooray!"

"All creatures are meant for their own time and generation, and when they live beyond it, they find themselves in the very antipode of what is real. He who is deathless—"

"He sure know how to—"

"—at length become an intruder in a new strange world, for manners, customs, deeds and purposes, all change and grow, develop, evolving to such a state that the relic from the ancient past can never feel at one with them."

"Yer sample's fine, bring on yer speech!"

"Seeking things familiar to him, things no longer existing, he moves as a single actor upon a lurid stage in nightmare pantomime, somnambulist in dream within a dream, knowing no season and no date, for all these signs become as adventitious tags to Time, the all-engulfing horror!"

"Hey!" protested Tommy Smith, "not so highbrow there!"

"Through years and decades I stride on and on, until the earth is remote, uncanny, a dazed immensity without color, without warmth—"

Nodding Frolickers, sleepy . . . . .

"—I am as one enclosed in glass, and cannot feel what common men can feel! I'm in the world, yet not of it!"

"What the hell's he ravin' about?" growled Frankie Jones.

"Hold yer gab," said Dillon. "That's real talk, an' you better listen while ye got the chanst, or if you don't wanta, go back to sleep. Go on there, Pentie, give 'em Hell. You may put these other guys to sleep, but me! say, I *like* to hear ye rave. Go on! This's yer birthday! You got the floor!"

The orator,

"I've got the floor! Then listen to the tale of one who feels with clear exquisite pain all sensations of the multifarious present, linking this with the broad pelagic past, and sketching a road into the dizzy future, these three then building to a whole that's madness. Past, present, and the future—"

"Aw, nuts!" grunted Johnnie Hencher, and settled to a nap.

"—behold Time's panorama, one mercifully clipped at either end for you, you with your buffers which keep the brain from fray

and fret against the law of change. For you there is a smudging blurring and diverting of the senses, but I lack all this, and have instead a weight of time that is crushing me to agony! I squirm, I writhe, I moan, I try to sleep,—it is the same: the pain goes on! there is no pause! until I sink exhausted, and all the warmth and humanness seeps out of my tortured heart, and all emotion dies!"

He paused abruptly, for the stranger across the restaurant was smiling just a little, whereupon Pentland raised his voice angrily,

"I say that my emotions have been killed! Good and evil, right and wrong, such ideas have fled, and all that is left to me is reason, reason robbed of the veils and props of feeling, reason that goads me mad, for when illusion is snatched from the picture of the world, the frame holds only drab sourness, exhibiting but a single facet!"

"And what is zat?" cried Dillon, rousing up to give his friend a hazy smile.

"Vanity!" cried Pentland, striking the table such a blow he almost woke up Eddie Jones. "Unending and persistent vanity! Untouched by time, I see time passing, I see it as a wave

that carries all but me to growth and fume and quick decay. I see the life of man compressed to ten short seconds, for he is but a bubble! a phantom looming out of chaos, burning quickly to an ash, and going back to chaos, fading to the eternity of nothingness."

"*Amō amās amat!*" cried Dillon, punching Tommy Smith to send his snore away. "I unnerstan' yer Latin! Go to it!"

He did go to it, raving on unchecked, but never forgetting his rhetoric, never,

"O time, the mirror in which all things reflect themselves as odious! ephemeral dross! O time the tide, incessant lap and surge inevitable, the wasting and corroding flow that beats all human aspirations down to sand! Time the jester, monstrous time, giving man only the present moment, which lately was not, and soon will be no more! O thou conjuror throwing on the screen of life an endless kaleidoscope having variety only to dolts blind to its recurrent themes, a false diversity teaching the folly of all effort and all struggle! O God, what is the use of talk, of thought, the use of prayer or action, the use of anything!"

"Wus matter, Pentie?" muttered Dillon,

who sat and blinked against the drowsiness creeping over him. "Don' git blue, ain't we the Frolickers?"

"Fool!" cried Pentland. "I've tried to drown my grief, but it can't be done! I'll stop pretending, and be myself again! America, the land of contrasts! A Pentland and a Dillon simulating friendship! I hate you! you and the swine they call the great American people!"

"Hey! watch out, 'are. Gotta be patriotic. Don' go 'sultin' 'Murican people."

"To hell with the American people! A hundred million lice, so I pronounce them! Chosen people! assembled from the dregs of every cesspool on the earth, brought here to spawn and sweat, idiots prattling of their destiny,—a confidence assumed to hide the inner nothingness! Chaos breeds life, yet in America it's bred no plan for life, and since man needs a plan, I say that this is no procession toward a goal, but only a dust cloud raised by tempest, in which there's neither vision nor a soul, but only bombast,— behold the great, let-us-be-greater American people. Hooray!"

" 'Ray!" cried Dillon, fumbling at a bottle. "Big stuff!"

"Big stuff!" Pentland echoed viciously, "ah yes! big stuff, that's what it is, stuff! and nothing more. Padding, bulk, weight! externals for the eye and finger, nothing more. Harping on the size of things, their number and dimension, mad for visibility and measurement, marvelling at the big, astounded by the bigger, hitching their wagons to the biggest, there's America! O big big land with biggest cities, biggest buildings, with biggest sales and biggest trains and biggest turnips, you are a conqueror, America! mistress of all that can be grasped with fist,—but where's your soul?"

" 'Ray fer 'Merica! No flies on her!"

"O America! you were planted long ago, but how can the shoots come up when you are ploughed incessantly? Turmoil is the foe of germination! the seeds of culture need quiet, long restful spells of calm for brooding spirit, the peace of deep reflection,—you lack all this! For more than a century you've had your way, only to become a stamping ground for blockheads, fools, and vulgar pigs, bour-

geoisie indifferent to the arts, prating of money and golf and motor cars, but never of inner spirit. It's business and dividends, how much our daughter's wedding cost, and what our income was and is and ever shall be, and don't forget the necessary smoke!

"Smoke! the symbol of the factories which are a refuge when we stand in need! We ain't got culture, hey? Well, then, we'll get it. We'll make it hum, you watch us! We'll print a million copies of the Angelus, a million more of Rembrandt done by himself (or is it Titian?), and we'll send 'em out free, one in every package of breakfast food. They'll reach the plumber, the baker, the powder-puff maker, and then they'll be more refined. With our radio we'll broadcast Aïda, greatest of the operas, and thus make South Dakota musical. Oh we with great machine, with printing press and mouthy talk, we'll turn out culture by the ton, as we do everything! Why not? Why not?

"O Christ!" cried Pentland then, "how can it be that all this bustle! activity! brisk energy! is toward the dark, not light! How can men live without a soul, as I have lived

so long! How can it be that life does not result in growth, in birth! The swelling form of great America some take for pregnancy, but though her heart kicked long ago, the child of spirit still loiters in the womb. I tried to make myself believe this greater girth is from a tumor, not a child, but why? Why all this growing, puffing, straining and expanding, this long-drawn travail, if there's no birth to come? What does it mean? What is the meaning of our life here in America?"

IX

Thus spoke Arthur Pentland, and paused and looked about expectantly. He roved his eyes around the table where the Frolickers were drowsing in their chairs, all of them asleep but Edward Dillon, who looked up heavily and muttered,

" 'Ray! Goo' speech. Set down . . . . . have a drink."

"So that's your answer? Time to stop! Bad form! for in America conversation must be frothy. Talk all you like of auto tires and baseball scores and childish novels, but on the

riddle of our secret life hold silent, else you're a fool!"

Johnnie Hencher pulled himself awake,

"Set down fer Christ sake! What are you, a book agent, or somethin'?"

"Yes, and you're Americans!" sneered Pentland. "You monkeys! when it comes to serious talk you're on a par with the laughing jackass."

"Go t' Hell!"

"Is life a blind and senseless pageant? a play without a meaning? a panorama conceived in nonsense and executed in the same? So much effort cannot be pointless, but what's the answer? What is the meaning of our life?"

Hencher had gone back to sleep and Dillon was nodding as Arthur Pentland turned to glower upon them. He turned his gaze upon the stranger sitting across the restaurant; the stranger watched him, listening to his further words,

"I sought an answer to this question, from metaphysics, because I'd heard so much of it, and how it clears up mystery. I went to those professing it, went as a pilgrim to a shrine,

and they, all buttressed round by dusty tomes ransacked for glib quotation, they gave me words and words and words, making sound but little sense,—they left me weak and faint, as if I'd dined on mattress stuffing. Whiskered old philosophers! their heads were bulging with their systems and their theories, but had no clutch on man's existence: the riddle was a page they could not read, but only slobber over!"

"Wake me up when ye git through!" grumbled Dillon, and slept.

Pentland fixed his gleaming eyes upon the stranger across the restaurant and ranted on,

"The pendulum swings and so did I, back through barren wide stretches, from abstruse thought to those who preached of practicality, and practiced what they preached. Cocksure ones, so satisfied with what they called their way of looking at the world,—their talk was taller than their stature. Blind to the invisible as metaphysics to the visible, life is only an engine to them. With finger and wrench and screwdriver they take the thing apart, and catalog its elements, and put it back together again, to show just how it works, and how

there is no spirit essence in it. There ain't, I say, else I'd have grabbed it with my pincers!

"These two extremes I tested," cried Pentland, swelling with eloquence, "and found no clue to what I sought, then as I lingered sad and dull along the roadside of this mortal life, I heard of others, seers! prophets! reformers of shining face and great great promise, but as I drew near to them they rose before me as cross-grained arrogance, bundles of lopsided crotchets, squint-eyed bantlings whining of their magic theories, their schemes ignoring disagreeing facts and forces, their remedies so water-tight, made up of seven reasons why this is so, and three principles for a future conduct, all labelled, cut and dried, rounded into pills for all the ills of life, simple treatment for complex diseases, forgetting this: to classify is to distort,—but making up for that by greater brag. Noise to make the hungry one believe the straw is wheat, ranting to sell their sieve for soup tureen, celebrating just-discovered truth, old familiar foolishness called by a different name, and all to bring about the millennium—oh Heaven save us from reformers!

"Three times I failed and tried a fourth!" cried Pentland, glaring at the silent listening stranger. "Fourth time and last, and this the bitterest of all my disappointments. Pacing, dully striding, going on my endless way, lo! I heard voices, sweet far-away victorious voices, singing of those who really understood, those few superior, who with their hands joined round in mutual admiration, made up a vast placenta, from which blind groping embryos like me might get the nourishment of vital juices. Such food, thought I, would course all through my limbs and bring me strength, and in my brain and in my heart and in my soul, 'twould build up clear sweet power, a cure for my great ache and great confusion. Weak though I was, hope gave me strength. I turned and walked as if on flowers.

"I sought and found, coming at length unto the Mighty City, where 'mid the buildings towering high, I found the wondrous beings whose mellow and triumphant voices had reached me from afar. I found them: dealers in free verse and criticism, combination sex perverts and music makers, authors, painters, lecturers and nameless freaks, the great Ameri-

can *intelligentsia,* above this little globe so high uprisen that problems here are simple things. Simple! oh so simple, for though the wit and wisdom of the ancient world pondered these things in vain, we settle 'em while we sip our tea, revealing, in our dapper explanation, logic of this sort: to sneer at food we eat in restaurant will prove that we eat well at home.

"What thought I as I stood in company with these great ones, before whose birth the world was but a sorry thing, and beyond whose taking off there is no hope for man? I thought them smart-alecks and poseurs, half imitation half triviality, jackals full of wind not meat, lingering at the very gates of Truth and yapping, announcing, as I made effort to pass in, that this gate led from the Truth, not to it, and furthermore that where they stood was center of the magic circle, not without it. I, sensing that they stood without, not in, made to go by, at which they howled and rent me, and tore my flesh, and when I fled they laughed at me, saying I was defeated."

The stranger smiled.

"And they were right," cried Pentland. "I

was defeated! I fled from them and to confusion greater than before, hemmed in by mirage! seeing substance melt to shadow! pacing broad and promising avenues, which as I went upon them, twisted and grew narrow, ending in blind alleys, cul-de-sacs! I sought and did not find, and yet I must, for in this reeling hour I know my destiny to lie with America! Somehow! in some profound and deep mysterious way, we're joined as stalk and tendril, we two to play a part in universal consummation, wayfaring toward a glorious end, for such an end, and only such, can justify, explain, transfigure the suffering I have tasted. And yet I'm mad, for these are words and only words! I am a fragment that is both a riddle in itself, and part and parcel of a greater puzzle, to all of which there is no answer."

He paused to bend his shuddering gaze upon the stranger sitting there across the restaurant, and then as if what he saw in him provoked suspicion and denial, Pentland cried,

"I swear there is no answer, and least of all in me! I am a shell, a husk, sick in my soul,

a skin packed tight with horror, ennui and despair, mad to vomit, yet cannot."

He buried his face in his trembling hands, —and looked up: the stranger had risen to his feet.

"You fiend!" cried Pentland, starting back, "the very sight of you is horrible! Why is it that your gaze can strip me bare, tear off the deep disguise I cling to, draw through my lips and into speech what I must say! Well, hear it, since you must, that in the flight from Heaven down to Earth I see the lives of men converging to a plan of how we are to build the fabric brotherhood, a fabric woven on the warp of earth by spirit's shuttle darting woof, fast-flying shuttle weaving many diverse and single threads into a wide triumphant unity, with pattern clear when we stand proper distance! And I at proper distance gaze and see and know there's order where from a nearer view I saw but nonsense. Behold in this the paradox: democracy first breaking down the shell of social class to let the earth breed up free-pulsing individuals, then working subtly craftily toward a newer unity, in which all men are brothers of the spirit, an end so wrenching

to my former self that I must swear I'll not take part in it!"

The stranger took a step forward, and Pentland seized the auto salesman by the arm,

"Wake up! Wake up and help me—he's after me!"

Dillon wobbled in his chair, opened an eye, and muttered as he fell asleep again,

" 'Smatter, Pentie? Got the snakes?"

The stranger took a step forward, and Pentland cried out,

"Stand back! I do not want you! I—Great God, what is happening? I feel oppression at my brain, my heart, my very being, a frightening hint at coming ease, as one who pregnant through a long gestation, now feels delivery is near. One hundred years ago tonight the seed was planted, growing within me from that time, though I deny it! Deny it! wishing none of that new spirit pressing toward my vent, for I am weak and sick, without the strength to do what I must do."

Slowly the stranger advanced, nearer, nearer, till Pentland with a scream of agony sprang backward, darting toward the door and running out into the night, leaving behind, oh

far behind! the *Restaurant de Super Luxe*, the stranger, too, the blond man with broad shoulders and very ruddy,—and Arthur Pentland as he ran was weeping. . . . .

An Ending Is Sometimes A Beginning

I

It was a day knee-deep in June—thus all love stories should begin—and all the broad and fertile valley lay humming underneath the press of humankind: great bustling cities, busy little towns, smoking mills and noisy factories, new suburbs yielding the sound of axe and saw and hammer, expansive farms with beast and plant and fragrant loamy soil harnessed to the needs of man. All this, and people everywhere, people moving talking buying selling, a multitude of tingling folks, who working with their hands and brains, pulsed to the rhythms of a mighty music: each was a bow to play upon the fiddle of the earth, each made his own peculiar melody, ten thousand single tunes then building to the grander sound of harmony, weaving to a wide triumphant symphony,—a road led out from all of this.

A road led out and dragged away, pointing away from the singing valley and to an empty waste, a road once fretted by the feet of many men, but now outgrown, abandoned; its every

farther turning was quieter and more obscure, until no longer highway, it was nothing but a road, a thing of dirt and ruts, with sod between the wheel marks, and weeds to menace it on either hand, a grassy lane between two rows of broken fence, and then there was no fence at all: the lane had narrowed to a trail.

Pushing, winding steadily, the way led past a ranch and a lonely house, crept in among the gentle earthy undulations, and in among the foothills softly swelling, rising, then, by slow degrees to a low plateau. It paused as if to rest, and afterward went on, climbing high above man's valley, up toward a spot where dazzling peaks shone as the very battlements of Heaven, giving a hint of Paradise free from mundane dross, high up, I say, above the hazy smelly world of men, far up and up to tower proud! superior! above the land of human habitation,—there on the summit of the mountain Arthur Pentland stood.

II

Upon the summit of the lofty mountain Pentland stood, upon a high uplifting peak

there by the western sea, above the world of men, alone on Heaven's height. Above his head the firmament was one vast dome of blue, and all about him lay a gentle mist, pierced here and there by sunlight's rays until it gave out gleams of golden hue, pink orange blue and greenish tints beyond all counting. Glory on a mountain top! a fresh clean world, a universe in which there was no ugliness, no noise, no human touch to tarnish beauty.

It was a place of deep pure calm, of brooding peace, of such profound serenity that Pentland's face relaxed into a smile. Down he sank upon a rock, leaned back and rested, gazing all about as one who's been away and now comes home. He looked about and as he gazed, somehow the scene was softly changing: the rays of sunlight one by one were drawing back, and as they went away the glorious tinting faded. The bright and pretty hues fled from the mist, and left it gray, dull. Pentland gazed, and gazing shivered just a little. He gulped and wet his lips and raised his trembling and uncertain voice,

"O Lord above, majestic and divine, I've fled humanity, and return to Thee. Chastened

and made humble, I have renounced the earth to turn again to Heaven. Accept me, Lord! Support me, for I am weak!"

He paused to gaze about, and as he looked he saw the mist was just a little thicker, cooler, too, more moist, a blanket fit to shroud dead barren things. The blue of Heaven had gone away, and when the wanderer lifted up his face in supplication, lo! he saw but fog. His pale gray eyes strained at the pale gray mass, his face shook with the surge of quick despair, he gave a cry and knelt and clasped his hands beseechingly,

"Almighty God, look down on me in pity. I am alone and weak, and troubled in my spirit, Lord. I swear that I *have* cast off the wretched world of men, and I . . . . . Thou givest me no sign, but I know well Thou dost exist,—if not, why I invent Thee! Yea! in my utter grief and misery, Lord, I now invent Thee! upon this very spot! for man is impotent without a staff, and needs, besides himself, a mightier one to succor him. Without this succor life's a coil, a maze, delusion and a snare, so I invent Thee! Be! therefore, and catch me up and suckle me!"

Thus crying praying and beseeching, he gazed on high and saw the clouds were momently more thick, nearer, colder. Above the head of Arthur Pentland vapor, mist, dank fog impenetrable, to right of him the same, to left and back and out before him likewise; silently the clouds were pressing round and round, nearer, closer round and round, until at last his hunted eyes perceived that he himself was center of the universe, its single bit of life, trembling on a barren rock, surrounded, pressed about by fog,—his little world was shrinking fast, converging to himself, at which a panic leaped into his face.

"O God!" he cried in direful agony, "O God, why dost Thou torture me? I take my oath I'm at my tether's end, why then this chill, this drab immensity, this friendless sterile chaos? Cleave Thou this silent and unliving mist, and give me comfort! Yea! Lord, do more than this! Send with Thy mighty arm a thunderbolt to strike me dead, for life on earth is but a hideous dream. A place of grief and misery, so I pronounce the world of men,—I've had enough of it. I've suffered long, Almighty One, take me, Lord, and give

me peace. Have pity on me, wretched sinner that I am. Take me, in the name of Christ, take me!"

Thus spoke Arthur Pentland on the mountain top, crying out in wild abandoned frenzy, and pausing then to gaze on high in awe and expectation. He looked, he saw but fog, mist closer thicker colder. To the right he gazed, and saw the same, to the left hand, too, and all about, he saw but fog, fog! fog! fog thicker and more wet, drab lifeless fog so cold, and oh! so silent. He cupped his ear to listen, and heard no sound: he was alone, alone upon the mountain top, away, oh! far away from all the hated world of humankind, and still he had no peace. Doubt came writhing to his eyes, doubt and vague dull apprehension, misgiving stronger with each passing moment—a sudden terror seized him—with a cry he sprang to his trembling feet.

Lingering there a moment he gazed aloft once more, and then with chattering teeth and senseless and unmeaning words he set off through the fog, stumbling in the misty stuff, a lost bewildered frightened creature, moving with uncertainty, fumbling through the silent,

chill and thickish fog, falling on sharp stones and tripping over roots, gasping, muttering brokenly, moaning in distress and great confusion, until he saw a shape that loomed up solid in the gray and yeasty sea of nothingness. He gave a little cry and stumbled nearer, nearer and still nearer tottering, coming, at length, so close he saw it was an automobile, and there beside it tinkering, he saw a man.

"Help!" cried Pentland. "I'm lost!"

The man turned around.

"I want to go back to the valley," Pentland cried, stumbling closer. "Will you take me?"

"Yes."

III

They set off down the road, slowly, noiselessly, weaving through the fog under the hands of the skilful driver,—he had turned on the lights, two great eyes to help him spy the way.

"How cold it is up here," muttered Pentland, shivering, squirming, staring wide-eyed at the vapor stretching ahead of them.

Silence.

"It's cold," repeated Pentland in uneasiness, "cold . . . . . so cold. It looked warm and inviting when I started, but it turned cold . . . . . unfriendly. This mountain climbing is deceiving. The summits look glorious from below, but they don't fulfill their promise when you reach them. The heights are barren, cold, swept by biting winds,—the air's too rare for men to live by. I find it a delusion and a snare. I'm disappointed . . . . . it's so cold . . . . . It's warmer in the valley down below . . . . . where men live . . . . . isn't it?"

"Yes," said the driver, peering ahead to make out the road they were travelling, the dark and tenebrous road winding from the mountain top down toward the valley teeming rich with human life.

"I'm cold," persisted Pentland. "I'm chilled through. I'm sick."

"You can get a doctor when we reach the valley."

But Pentland groaned,

"There is no doctor for the sickness I have."

"What sickness have you?"

"Sickness of the body, heart, and soul, a

chronic complicated malady beyond the skill of doctors."

"There are all sorts of doctors nowadays, specialists."

"I've tried them all," growled Pentland. "They have no power to ease me. Stranger, you do not know who I am, else you'd not suggest a doctor so blandly. I am a man of a strange and curious destiny, whose story is a long and bitter one. If you like, I'll tell it to beguile the time."

"Very well."

Pause.

"My name is Arthur Pentland. I was born of aristocratic parents—"

"Eh?"

"My name is Arthur Pentland. I was born in Philadelphia, being prematurely delivered into the world . . . . ."

IV

So Arthur Pentland began to talk, telling, as they drifted down the mountain road, of all his trials and troubles, of how at last he saw himself as a clear outstanding fragment in Life's pattern, and how self-pity, hate and sor-

row held him back and made him rage and run away. He told of how he fled the world of men and went upon the mountain. As a child he'd looked for comfort in his mother's bed, and now as a greater infant he thought to shun his destiny by shrivelling back into the womb of withered old religion, the narrow bloodless shell of Heaven.

He paused a while, the car sped on, and Pentland went on talking. With a trembling voice he said that this had been his frantic hope, but as he stood there on the summit, he felt himself drawn not to Heaven but to Earth, or rather, say, to heaven upon the earth, for now they joined and somehow seemed they never had been separated. A flood of clear perception rose in him, a flame, a light, a spring of water giving hope and courage, a force that drew aside the veil and showed the world in all its glory. What had once seemed chaos appeared to him as growth, the very diversity and turbulence of which took place as facets to a single living jewel, and he, who'd clamored for an answer to the meaning of it all, said this: there is no meaning to our life here in America save that it

must have meaning, there is no answer more than perception of the fact that an answer is what we've got to have. All this love showed him in a flash.

The car rode on, the driver held his peace, but Pentland not: love was a word that threw him into an ecstasy. He mouthed it tenderly, declaring it the secret he'd uncovered in his heart. Not love as he had once conceived it, not sentiment, not affection for the flesh, not love for individuals as such, none of this! but what's more glorious far, a universal force that makes the world go round, a yearning pulsing and unconscious aspiration, incessant flowing toward that fulfillment which will bring ease.

Love of this sort, so Pentland said, binds up with ideality, and takes from us the label of materialism, and shows us forth as pragmatists intent upon results, for since we cannot know the ultimate reality of things, it's lawful that we conjure up as real what we can grasp with our imagination, thus satisfying the needs of heart and brain. But though we are intent on what is definite, said Pentland joyously, we're pushing over and beyond the practical, toward

that ideal of spirit which is the hidden goal no man can reach, and yet must strive for.

"Such is my story," he concluded. "I've shed my doubts and found my peace. Unhappiness is fleeing me, as all about this car the fog is fleeing, for now I see my tribulations were due to my own greatness, to the prod and prick of that infinity within me which all my pettiness could not destroy or smother down. But talking has fatigued me; I'm going to take a nap."

He closed his eyes and leaned back in the seat, when all at once the stranger at the wheel switched off the headlights of the car and cried,

"The fog is gone, the night is gone! Barren heights are left behind, and you have come back to where men dwell! So waken, Arthur Pentland, for there's no sleeping for you now! This is the dawn, not dusk! The curtain of your life is going up, not down, and so awake!"

V

"Rouse up!" the blond man cried at Arthur Pentland's side, "rouse up, do not sink down! Shaken from the grip of one somnambulism,

will you fall into another and call it wakefulness? You think to rest, but inert dream and lassitude have been your rôle too long. It's rest no more!"

"But—"

"Your talking has fatigued you, sir! but I wonder just how far your words will carry. They tell of inner change and deep conviction, but that's no coin to purchase rest. Oh sincere words, no doubt, but words for all of that,—such are suspicious."

"Yet I can promise—"

"You can, but what of that? Intention outruns ability, hence it were better that man never made a promise, or took an oath, but only acted. We do not know how prospects taste until we go to them and seize them, therefore your words are vain; between your protest and the proof the way is wide, so wide, so very wide. You speak of love, but love's an empty word if it does not set a man to action. You would relax, but must not. The cosmic riddle! you've not solved it, but only glimpsed the form in which it outwardly exists. Hear this, that in your plain of spirit's unity lie the transverse yawning gulfs of caste, and

underneath the whole the benumbing clutch of that machine idea which in upending us sets up as head what should be feet. Have you courage? Then forward! For long long years a scoffing prodding tongue has kept you from rust and sloth,—now be your own urge and controlling hand, and prove your words are more than words. Freed from the shell of old inheritance, and broken at last to fragments, there now begins in you the long and arduous task of building you anew, that from the wreck of a life begun awry and gone awry so long, there may be made a man."

"But how?"

"By fusing with the earth you tried to flee, by really seizing what so far you've only said you've seized. Struggle back to childhood's view, but cast away the haunted pallid eyes you had as infant. Strive for that true far-seeing mysticism which is a phase of consciousness not abortive vagary, and thence filter upward through the earth. I offer you this truth, that man is still too weak and young a thing, too feeble, gross and stupid, to soar above the earth. He leaves his strength who leaves the earth, rave as he will in tangled and

unmeaning phrase. He keeps his strength who stays on earth, and has more strength, for it's our reservoir, if we but labor with it. The earth on which we stand is womb for all that's born, magician showing matter to be spirit, a pool in which we gaze and see what we may call the pattern of our destiny. The earth! the earth! it is our all, our guide and wonder, teacher, too, and we are its impatient children, who must be whipped to see that though the single letters make no sense, their careful and laborious joining turns them to words and sentences, and these have meaning."

The blond man paused, and presently resumed,

"The dawn is coming fast, and we approach the crossroads. Soon we must part, here by the western sea, where like rest-seeking wanderers in all ages, you came, intent upon the grave behind the setting sun. To this far place you found your way,—start back. Start back, but with new vision, hope and courage, treading the selfsame routes, but struggling now to see, not single senseless letters, but meaning words and sentences. Sneer no more,

nor hold aloof from any. Discover that you have hands, that dirt is holy, and work is but a means of taking glory's pulse. Mix freely with all men, weave in with every strand of this our heaving and our motley population, see all of these and many more, all sorts and types of humankind, all restless bits of yeast in vast ferment, know all of these, observe and love and understand them,—it is your fate."

"And the end?" cried Pentland.

"The end is that there is no end. Action and ceaseless energy, that is the end. Unending struggle for a goal never to be reached, that is the end. And yet though all is flux and truth can have no final form, let no dismay be bred in you, for man is the measure of all that moves about himself, and satisfaction, you'll at last discover, lies in becoming, not in being, lies in the running, not in the finished race. All is unfinished, incomplete, and never shall be otherwise. Experiment, hazard, dire uncertainty, all these confront you, as from the pulsing of our spirit you go on and on,—and now we're at the crossroads."

The car stopped.

They got out.

"Oh I will gladly go," cried Pentland, "but won't you come with me? Without you I'll be weak and filled with doubt, misgiving, vacillation, the dummy of a ventriloquist without the guiding hand and voice."

"The dummy must stand alone."

"But I am lonely! more lonely than ever in my life before. Oh come with me, I beg you. You are my brother!"

"It is human to hunger for companionship," the other answered sadly, "yet when we seek it, we blight our nobler self. Every contact with another leaves its blemish and its scar, and though down in his inner heart man is ever lonely, none other than himself can enter there, as likewise he can never merge with another's soul. We aspire to know our fellow men and be known of them, but it's our destiny to pass among them evaluated falsely, our superficial self appraised, but our deepest vice and virtue ignored, even unsuspected. We yearn for brotherhood, but though we actually approach it, it must remain an ideal. The highest fate of man is to go his way alone and secretly, upon a path that is hidden from all others. He who is a searcher after Truth

must follow his solitary course, and seek out suffering."

"What! seek out suffering?"

The blond man gave a weary little smile,

"Many have preached of happiness; I speak to you of pain and sorrow. Happiness is the aim of weaklings, a lure, a false deceiver, destroying virtue, celebrating vice, and he who seeks it wounds himself. Look to the other pole! to pain and evil, danger, trouble,—these are man's best friends, sorting the feeble to the rubbish heap and lifting the strong to greater things, upbuilding in these last the very frame of character. Court suffering, therefore, that your soul may be ploughed deep and from it spring a better man, and if you pass through sorrow's gantlet without wavering, without shrinking back, and if you issue from her further countless trials, you shall become a god."

"A god!" and Pentland shuddered and drew back.

"A god! The lowly savage sometimes thought himself a god, and though the prod of aspiration drove later peoples skyward, there now begins a trend toward that return to

earth which has for culmination, not God in Heaven, but many gods on earth. Not paradise conferred by an omniscient hand, but progress toward perfection here below and by our own human efforts, behold in this last step and frank admission, summation of the circle. The destiny of man is to reveal and show in full developed form the embryo now lurking in him, to shed his dross by toil and struggle, prayer and thought; then clearly shining forth as perfect, absorb into himself the universe, himself expanding to the same, and thus upon equality! not bended knee, associate with that ideal we name, for lack of better word, our God. And now good-bye, we've talked too long. With words we titillate the outward form of things, with action, work, and aspiration you must seize and make the truth of life your own."

"I'll go!" cried Pentland. "I'll go, but tell me first, is this farewell, or shall we meet again?"

"We shall meet again."

"But where? and when?"

"Upon the road, the endless road, in some far distant time unknown to both of us, when

your own searching seeking wandering, shall be extinguished in the end of my own quest."

Pentland bowed low, and said,

"Then until that time shall come, good-bye."

"Good-bye," I answered.

The following pages contain a few of the critical reviews of other novels by Thames Williamson.

REVIEWS OF RUN SHEEP RUN

"Impressive." — *New York Sun.*

"Fascinating." — *Bliss Perry*, Harvard University.

"As simple as ultimate truth — and as grand." — *Jim Tully.*

"This is a book to be read at a sitting." — *Cleveland Plain Dealer.*

"A strange and sinister tale, unlike anything we have read in all the earlier deluge of western fiction." — *Boston Herald.*

"Williamson has, obviously, a fine feeling for sky and star, wind and mountain, waterfall and forest and flower." — *San Francisco Chronicle.*

"A mountain idyll. Better certainly than anything that has come out of the Sierras since Muir's rare passages of lyric prose." — *Henry Seidel Canby.*

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"More readable and impressive than a whole wagonload of ordinary western stories, and significant because it marks the beginning of a literary career of unusual promise." — *Galveston News.*

"This tale of sheepherding in the mountains of central California is so arresting that the critical vocabulary halts on the tongue. There are so many kinds of things the book might have been that it isn't. If it must be described in terms of artistic creation, it is more akin to Greek drama than to the fiction of the day." — *Harvard Crimson Bookshelf.*

"In 'Run Sheep Run' we are confronted with a quite unconventional novel of primal life and force. This novel has been written with delicacy of imagination and realistic insight. A bold and brilliant study. Its power is such that it fascinates. . . . A novel of honest vigor, as distinguished from so much of our whining literature." — *New York Times.*

"A primitive tale this, virile and oddly fascinating. A tale of buzzards wheeling against the sky; flocks of sheep, driven and dumb; great mountains and lonely places; Paddy, the faithful, wistful sheep-dog; and Bill, the sheepherder, goaded almost mad by solitude, brutal, crude, coarse, fairly sinister with his overwrought nerves. Realism of the Sierra Nevadas, poignantly, imaginatively, absorbingly done." — *International Book Review.*

REVIEWS OF GYPSY DOWN THE LANE

"Intensely dramatic." — *Cincinnati Enquirer.*

"A brutalized conflict that is both superb and cruel." — *New York Times.*

"A delightful love story unravelled with unexcelled skill." — *Salt Lake City Telegram.*

"His volume, full of outdoors and the spirit of things when the world was young, is an abiding joy." — *Boston Transcript.*

"Mr. Williamson has grasped the intensively subjective, eminently pagan attitude of the wanderer." — *Harvard Crimson Bookshelf.*

"An exuberant romance of gypsy life in New England and New York State — by a man who has lived with the gypsies and is an authority on their ways." — *International Book Review.*

"Certainly, in a book that seems to have been produced without effort, merely a bubbling, fast moving sort of fantasy, Thames Williamson has achieved a remarkable result." — *Brooklyn Eagle.*

"It is a penetrating study that Williamson has made, brilliant in its characterizations, sympathetic in its insight, and alive at all times, reflecting as many moods as life itself. . . . A splendid story." — *Sacramento, Cal., Bee.*

"The narrative form is excellent, the dialect is clever, the plot is unusually strong, and there is no hint of the melodrama that would have spoiled the book had it been written by a weaker pen than Williamson's." — *Nutley, N. J., Sun.*

"Mr. Williamson gives us an unusually competent piece of picaresque literature, depicting a series of episodes that range from the broadly comic to the gruesomely tragic, and at the same time investing his narrative with a magic sort of poetry. Its place on the book shelves should be near the works of Borrow." — *Buffalo, N. Y., Times.*

"Good reading, bright and sparkling on the surface, but with under-currents of speculations and suggestions. Mr. Williamson possesses large and liberal gifts. He has insight into the primitive and a sense of kinship with fundamental states of mind and emotions. He knows the beauty of Nature, but also her indifference to the fate of man and her superb cruelty." — *New York Post.*

"Mr. Williamson writes a cadenced prose which is nothing short of sheer beauty. Almost any page could be broken into free verse of the highest order, yet there is never the sense of straining or distorting the phrasing for the sake of this effect. Its naturalness is a triumph, just as the beauty and dramatic poignancy of the story are something long to haunt the reader." — *Boston Herald.*

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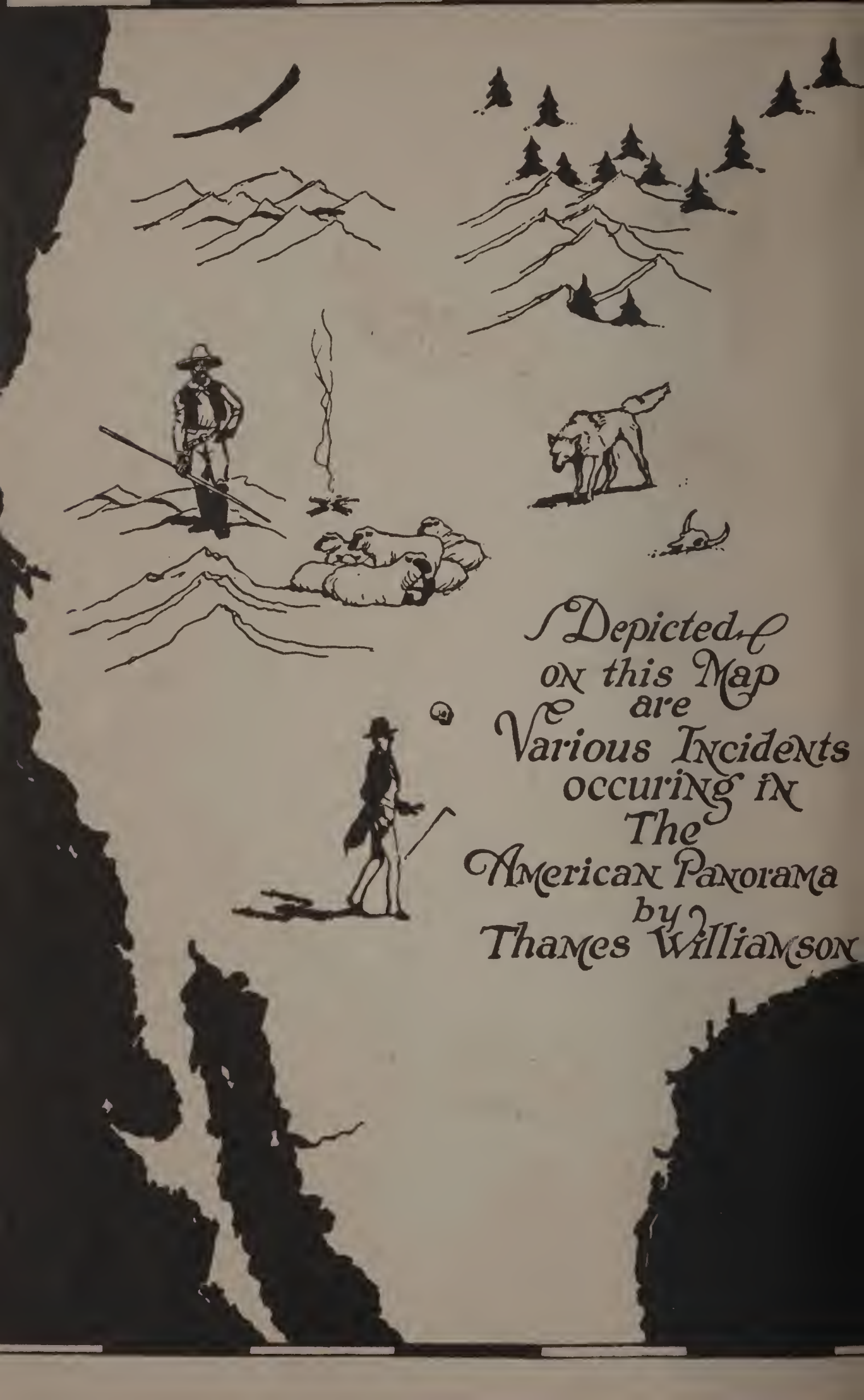
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